

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

**OUR PASTORAL SERVICE COMPELS US
TO PRESERVE, DEFEND, AND COMMUNICATE
THE TRUTH**

Pope John Paul II

PAPAL GUIDELINES AT PUEBLA

Joseph M. de Torre

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

Pontifical Council for the Laity

ON THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD

Philippine Hierarchy

EVERY CHILD IS OUR OWN

Kurt Waldheim

**ARE CATHOLICS NOW ALLOWED
TO JOIN MASONRY?**

Florencio Testera, O.P.

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THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at U.S.T. Press, Manila Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Subscription Rates (Effective January, 1979). Yearly subscription in the Philippines.:

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Newsprint	P35	P65	P98
Bookpaper	P40	P75	P110

Price per copy: Newsprint — P6.00. Bookpaper — P8.00. Back issue, P6.00. Abroad, \$20.00 per year. Back issue, \$5.00. Subscriptions are paid in advance.

Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor. Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager. Orders for renewals or changes of address should include both old and new addresses and will go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Address all communication to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

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University of Santo Tomas
Manila, Philippines

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EDITORIAL

Unless The Lord Build The House

Not just for the sake of formality did Pope John Paul II send a message to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, V, held in Manila. He wanted to offer to it not only fraternal encouragement but "a spiritual and ethical contribution drawn from the heritage of the Gospel." He did this out of the conviction, already spelled out by the Second Vatican Council, that the Church has to help humanity regain control of its material and social universe.

UNCTAD, meeting for the fifth time since 1967, seeks to re-structure the world economic order and bridge the chasm between the rich industrialized nations led by the U.S.A., West Germany and Japan together with Russia and some of the socialist countries, and the poor developing nations mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In 1973 and 1976, partly due to a new awareness of power oil-producing Arab countries, the "third world" began to hope that a new era was dawning. It was therefore with great expectations that Asians, Africans and Latin Americans representing developing countries arrived in Manila early in May. They were soon disappointed when they listened to the lectures, or empty assurances of cooperation or vague promises of aid proffered by representatives from the USA, West Germany and Japan.

The drive to set up a "Common Fund" of \$750 million may serve to illustrate the frustration of the poor countries. The United States refused to contribute to the fund while other big, rich countries refused to make specific commitments. The Philippines pledged \$50 million, which was equaled by Yugoslavia. Norway pledged \$25 million, Belgium \$15 million, Finland and Austria each \$2 million. Canada \$1 million, etc. The total of the pledges did not even reach \$200 million.

It is true that UNCTAD V was not a total failure. Some gains were made towards eliminating the rich countries' protectionism detrimental to the exports of developing countries, fostering economic cooperation among the Third World nations, confirming the need for a common fund to stabilize the pricing of products exported to industrialized states, establishing monetary and financial agreements, transferring technology to the developing nations, and concurring on a code of conduct for conferences on world shipping. But these are little steps that do not amount to the giant stride that mankind needs to make for the equitable distribution of the world's riches.

The Vatican delegation to UNCTAD V warned participants from taking an exclusively economic standpoint. Recalling the principle enunited by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, they invited rich and poor nations alike to seek the development of the whole man and of the whole society.

We can add that the UNCTAD V delegates seem to have forgotten still another very important principle enunited in the Bible: "If the Lord does not build the house, the work of the builders is useless; if the Lord does not protect the city, it does no good for the sentries to stand guard" (Psalm 127:1).

We invite our readers to help in salvaging the work of UNCTAD V by praying the Lord of Justice to make justice prevail in the world economic order.

IN THIS ISSUE

Strongly supporting the United Nations' campaign to look after the rights and welfare of children, the leadership of the Catholic Church has spoken out on this topic. We invite our readers to reflect on the Council of the Laity's document on the *Pastoral Care of Children* and the Philippine Hierarchy's Pastoral Letter on the *Life of the Unborn Child*. Kurt Waldheim's paper, *Every Child is our Own* clarifies what the United Nations wants to achieve through the International Year of the Child.

Related to concern for children is the problem of *Our Constitution and Divorce, Marriage, and the Family*, about which Fr. Juan Gaborini writes, and the *Priesthood of Parents*, discussed by Fr. Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

This double issue of our Boletín also calls the attention of our readers to another very important concern of the Church, the correct orientation of Liberation Theology. To this end we publish Pope John II's *Opening Address* to the Bishops of Latin America gathered at Puebla, Mexico. Fr. Joseph M. de Torre offers us his reflections on the *Papal Guidelines*.

From time to time people ask us about the stand of the Catholic Church on *Masonry*. Fr. Florencio Testera's article is helpful in clarifying this question.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA

**OUR PASTORAL SERVICE COMPELS US
TO PRESERVE, DEFEND, AND
COMMUNICATE THE TRUTH**

On Sunday 28 January, in the Major Seminary Palafoxiano of Puebla de Los Angeles, there opened the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate. Before the representatives of all the Bishops of Latin America John Paul II delivered the following discourse.

Beloved Brothers in the Episcopate,

This hour that I have the happiness to experience with you is certainly an historic one for the Church in Latin America. World opinion is aware of this, as are the faithful members of your local Churches, and especially you yourselves are aware of it, you who will be the protagonists and leaders of this hour.

It is also an hour of grace, marked by the drawing near of the Lord, by a very special presence and action of the Spirit of God. For this reason we have confidently invoked that Spirit, at the beginning of our work. For this reason also I now wish to implore you, as a brother to very beloved brothers: all the days of this Conference and in every one of its acts, let yourselves be led by the Spirit, open yourselves to his inspiration and his impulse, let it be he and no other spirit that guides and strengthens you.

Under the guidance of this Spirit, for the third time in the last twenty-five years you, the bishops of all the countries representing the Episcopate of the Continent of Latin America, have gathered together to study more deeply together the meaning of your mission in the face of the new demands of your peoples.

The Conference that is now opening, convoked by the revered Paul VI, confirmed by my unforgettable predecessor John Paul I, and reconfirmed by myself as one of the first acts of my pontificate, is linked with the Conference now long past, held in Rio de Janeiro, which had as its most notable result the birth of CELAM. But it is linked even more closely with the second Conference, of Medellín, of which it marks the tenth anniversary.

In these last ten years, how much progress humanity has made, and, with humanity and at its service, how much progress the Church has made! This third Conference cannot disregard that reality. It will therefore have to take as its point of departure the conclusions of Medellín, with all the positive elements that they contained, but without ignoring the incorrect interpretations at times made and which call for calm discernment, opportune criticism, and clear choices of position.

You will be guided in your debates by the Working Document, prepared with such care so as to constitute the constant point of reference.

But you will also have at hand Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. With what care the great Pontiff approved as the Conference's theme: "The present and the future of evangelization in Latin America"!

Those who were close to him during the months when the Assembly was being prepared can tell you this. They can also bear witness to the gratitude with which he learned that the basic material of the whole Conference would be this text, into which he put his whole pastoral soul, as his life drew to a close. Now that he has "closed his eyes to this world's scene" (Testament of Paul VI), this document becomes a spiritual testament that the Conference will have to scrutinize with love and diligence, in order to make it the other obligatory point of reference, and in order to see how to put it into practice. The whole Church is grateful to you for the example that you are giving, for what you are doing, and what other local Churches will perhaps do in their turn.

The Pope wishes to be with you at the beginning of your labours, and he is thankful to the Father of lights from whom comes down every perfect gift (cf. James 1:17) for having been able to be with you at yesterday's Solemn Mass, under the maternal gaze of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as also at the Mass this morning. I would very much like to stay with you in prayer, reflection and work: be sure that I shall stay with you in spirit, while the "anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor 11:28) calls me elsewhere. I wish at least, before continuing my pastoral visit through Mexico and before my return to Rome, to leave you as a pledge of my spiritual presence a few words, uttered with the solicitous care of a Pastor and the affection of a Father; words which are the echo of my main preoccupations regarding the theme you have to deal with and regarding the life of the Church in these beloved countries.

I

Teachers of the truth

It is a great consolation for the universal Father to note that you come together here not as a symposium of experts, not as a parliament of politicians, not as a congress of scientists or technologists, however important such assemblies may be, but as a fraternal encounter of Pastors of the Church. And as Pastors you have the vivid awareness that your principal duty is to be Teachers of the Truth. Not a human and rational truth, but the Truth that comes from God, the Truth that brings with it the principle of the authentic liberation of man: "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn. 8:32); that Truth which is the only one that offers a solid basis for an adequate "praxis".

I. 1. To be watchful for purity of doctrine, the basis in building up the Christian community, is therefore, together with the proclamation of the Gospel, the primary and irreplaceable duty of the Pastor, of the Teacher of the faith. How often Saint Paul emphasized this, convinced as he was of the seriousness of the accomplishment of this duty (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 18-20; 4:11, 16; 2 Tim. 1:4-14). Over and above unity in love, unity in truth is always urgent for us. The beloved Pope Paul VI, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, said: "The Gospel entrusted to us is also the word of truth. A truth which liberates and which alone gives peace of heart is what people are looking for when we proclaim the Good News to them. The truth about God, about man and his mysterious destiny, about the world . . . The preacher of the Gospel will therefore be a person who even at the price of personal renunciation and suffering always seeks the truth that he must transmit to others. He never betrays or hides truth out of a desire to please men, in order to astonish or to shock, nor for the sake of originality or a desire to make an impression . . . We are the pastors of the faithful people, and our pastoral service impels us to preserve, defend, and to communicate the truth regardless of the sacrifices that this involves" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 78)

Truth concerning Jesus Christ

I. 1. From you, Pastors, the faithful of your countries expect and demand above all a careful and zealous transmission of the truth concerning Jesus Christ. This truth is at the centre of evan-

gelization and constitutes its essential content: "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22).

From the living knowledge of this truth will depend the vigour of the faith of millions of people. From it will also depend the strength of their support of the Church and of their active presence as Christians in the world. From this knowledge there will derive choices, values, attitudes and modes of behavior capable of orienting and defining our Christian life and of creating new people, and hence a new humanity, for the conversion of the individual and social conscience (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18).

It is from a solid Christology that there must come light on so many doctrinal and pastoral themes and questions that you intend to study in these coming days.

I. 3. And then we have to confess Christ before history and the world with a conviction that is profound, deeply felt and lived, just as Peter confessed him: "You are the Christ the Son of the living God." (Mt. 16:16)

This is the Good News in a certain sense unique: the Church lives by it and for it, just as she draws from it everything that she has to offer to people, without any distinction of nation, culture, race, time, age or condition. For this reason "from that confession of faith (Peter's) the sacred history of salvation and of the People of God could not fail to take on a new dimension" (Homily of Pope John Paul II at the solemn inauguration of his Pontificate, 22 October 1978).

This is the one Gospel, and "even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed", as the Apostle wrote in very clear terms (Gal. 1:8).

I. 4. In fact, today there occur in many places — the phenomenon is not a new one — "re-readings" of the Gospel, the result of theoretical speculations rather than authentic meditation on the word of God and a true commitment to the Gospel. They cause confusion by diverging from the central criteria of the faith of the Church, and some people have the temerity to pass them on, under the guise of catechesis, to the Christian communities.

In some cases either Christ's divinity is passed over the silence, or some people in fact fall into forms of interpretation at variance with the Church's faith. Christ is said to be merely a "prophet", one who proclaimed God's Kingdom and love, but not the true Son of God, and therefore not the centre and object of the very Gospel message.

In other cases people claim to show Jesus as politically committed, as one who fought against Roman oppression and the authorities, and also as one involved in the class struggle. This idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis. By confusing the insidious pretexts of Jesus's accusers with the — very different — attitude of Jesus himself, some people adduce as the cause of his death the outcome of a political conflict, and nothing is said of the Lord's will to deliver himself and of his consciousness of his redemptive mission. The Gospels clearly show that for Jesus anything that would alter his mission as the Servant of Yahweh was a temptation (cf. Mt 4:8; Lk 4:5). He does not accept the position of those who mixed the things of God with merely political attitudes (cf. Mt 22:21; Mk 12:17; Jn 18:36). He unequivocally rejects recourse to violence. He opens his message of conversion to everybody, without excluding the very Publicans. The perspective of his mission is much deeper. It consists in complete salvation through a transforming, peacemaking, pardoning and reconciling love. There is no doubt, moreover, that all this is very demanding for the attitude of the Christian who wishes truly to serve his least brethren, the poor, the needy, the emarginated; in a word, all those who in their lives reflect the sorrowing face of the Lord (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 8).

I. 5. Against such "re-readings" therefore, and against the perhaps brilliant but fragile and inconsistent hypotheses flowing from them, "Evangelization in the present and future of Latin America" cannot cease to affirm the Church's faith: Jesus Christ, the Word and the Son of God, becomes man in order to come close to man and to offer him, through the power of his mystery, salvation, the great gift of God (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19 and 27).

This is the faith that has permeated your history and has formed the best of the values of your peoples and must go on animating, with every energy, the dynamism of their future. This is the faith that reveals the vocation to harmony and unity that must drive away

the dangers of war in this continent of hope, in which the Church has been such a powerful factor of integration. This is the faith, finally, which the faithful people of Latin America through their religious practices and popular piety express with such vitality and in such varied ways.

From this faith in Christ, from the bosom of the Church, we are able to serve men and women, our peoples, and to penetrate their culture with the Gospel, to transform hearts, and to make systems and structures more human.

Any form of silence, disregard, mutilation or inadequate emphasis of the whole of the Mystery of Jesus Christ that diverges from the Church's faith cannot be the valid content of evangelization. "Today, under the pretext of a piety that is false, under the deceptive appearance of a preaching of the Gospel, some people are trying to deny the Lord Jesus", wrote a great Bishop in the midst of the hard crises of the fourth century. And he added: "I speak the truth, so that the cause of the confusion that we are suffering may be known to all. I cannot keep silent" (Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *Contra Auxentium*, 1-4). Nor can you, the bishops of today, keep silent when this confusion occurs.

This is what Pope Paul VI recommended in his opening discourse at the Medellín Conference: "Talk, speak out, preach, write. United in purpose and in programme, defend and explain the truths of the faith by taking a position on the present validity of the Gospel, on questions dealing with the life of the faithful and the defence of Christian conduct..." (Pope Paul VI's Discourse, I).

I too will not grow weary of repeating, as my duty of evangelizing the whole of mankind obliges me to do: "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development" (the Pope's Homily at the Inauguration of the Pontificate, 22 October 1978).

The truth concerning the Church's mission

I. 6. You are teachers of the Truth, and you are expected to proclaim unceasingly, but with special vigour at this moment, the truth concerning the mission of the Church, object of the Creed that

we profess, and an indispensable and fundamental area for our fidelity. The Church was established by the Lord as a fellowship of life, love and truth (*Lumen Gentium*, 9) and as the body, the *Pleroma* and the sacrament of Christ, in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells (*Lumen Gentium*, 7).

The Church is born of our response in faith to Christ. In fact, it is by sincere acceptance of the Good News that we believers gather together in Jesus' name in order to seek together the Kingdom, build it up and live it (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 13). The Church is "the assembly of those who in faith look to Jesus as the cause of salvation and the source of unity and peace" (*Lumen Gentium*, 9).

But on the other hand we are born of the Church. She communicates to us the riches of life and grace entrusted to her. She generates us by baptism, feeds us with the sacraments and the word of God, prepares us for mission, leads us to God's plan, the reason for our existence as Christians. We are her children. With just pride we call her our Mother, repeating a title coming down from the centuries, from the earliest times (cf. Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Eglise*).

She must therefore be called upon, respected and served, for "one cannot have God for his Father, if he does not have the Church for his Mother" (Saint Cyprian, *De Unitate*, 6, 8), one cannot love Christ without loving the Church which Christ loves (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 16), and "to the extent that one loves the Church of Christ, he possesses the Holy Spirit" (Saint Augustine, *In Ioannem tract.*, 32,8).

Love for the Church must be composed of fidelity and trust. Stressing, in the first discourse of my pontificate, my resolve to be faithful to the Second Vatican Council and my desire to dedicate my greatest care to the ecclesiological area, I called on people to take once again into their hands the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* in order to "meditate with renewed and invigorating zeal on the nature and function of the Church, her way of being and acting . . . not merely in order that the vital communion in Christ of all who believe and hope in him should be accomplished, but also in order to contribute to bringing about a fuller and closer unity of the whole human family" (First Message of John Paul II to the Church and the World, 17 October 1978).

Now, at this surpassing moment in the evangelization of Latin America, I repeat the call: "Assent to this document of the Council;

seen in the light of Tradition and embodying the dogmatic formulae issued a century ago by the First Vatican Council, will be for us, pastors and faithful, a clear signpost and urgent incentive for walking — let us repeat — the paths of life and history" (*ibid.*).

I. 7. There is no guarantee of serious and vigorous evangelizing activity without a well-founded ecclesiology.

The first reason is that evangelization is the essential mission, the distinctive vocation and the deepest identity of the Church, which has in turn been evangelized (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14-15; *Lumen Gentium*, 5). She has been sent by the Lord and in her turn sends evangelizers to preach "not their own selves or their personal ideas, but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners, to dispose of it as they wish" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15). A second reason is that "evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 60), which is not subject to the discretionary power of individualistic criteria and perspective but to that of communion with the Church and her pastor (*cf. ibid.*).

How could there be authentic evangelizing, if there were no ready and sincere reverence for the sacred Magisterium, in clear awareness that by submitting to it the People of God are not accepting the word of men but the true word of God? (*cf. 1 Thesis 2:13; Lumen Gentium*, 12). "The 'objective' importance of this Magisterium must always be kept in mind and also safeguarded, because of the attacks being levelled nowadays in various quarters against some certain truths of the Catholic faith" (First Message of John Paul II to the Church and the World, 17 October 1978).

I well know your attachment and availability to the See of Peter and the love that you have always shown it. From my heart I thank you in the Lord's name for the deeply ecclesial attitude implied in this and I wish you yourselves the consolation of counting on the loyal attachment of your faithful.

1.8. In the abundant documentation with which you have prepared this Conference, especially in the contributions of many Churches, a certain uneasiness is at times noticed with regard to the very interpretation of the nature and mission of the Church. Allusion is made, for instance, to the separation that some set up between the Church and the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is emptied of its full content and is understood in a rather secularist sense: it is interpreted as being reached not by faith and membership in the Church but by the mere changing of structures and social

political involvement, and as being present wherever there is a certain type of involvement and activity for justice. This is to forget that "the Church receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the seed and beginning of that Kingdom" (*Lumen Gentium*, 5).

In one of his beautiful catechetical instructions Pope John Paul I, speaking of the virtue of hope, warned that "it is wrong to state that political, economic and social liberation coincides with salvation in Jesus Christ, that the *Regnum Dei* is identified with the *Regnum hominis*."

In some cases an attitude of mistrust is produced with regard to the "institutional" or "official" Church, which is considered as alienating, as opposed to another Church of the people, one "springing from the people" and taking concrete form in the poor. These positions could contain different, not always easily measured, degrees of familiar ideological forms of conditioning. The Council has reminded us what is the nature and mission of the Church. It has reminded us how her profound unity and permanent up-building are contributed to by those who are responsible for the ministry of the community and have to count on the collaboration of the whole People of God. In fact, "if the Gospel that we proclaim is seen to be rent by doctrinal disputes, ideological polarizations or mutual condemnations among Christians, at the mercy of the latter's differing views on Christ and the Church and even because of their different concepts of society and human institutions, how can those to whom we address our preaching fail to be disturbed, disoriented, even scandalized?" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 77).

THE TRUTH CONCERNING MAN

1.9. The truth that we owe to man is, first and foremost, a truth about man. As witnesses of Jesus Christ we are heralds, spokesmen and servants of this truth. We cannot reduce it to the principles of a system of philosophy or to pure political activity. We cannot forget it or betray it.

Perhaps one of the most obvious weaknesses of present-day civilization lies in an inadequate view of man. Without doubt, our age is the one in which man has been most written and spoken of, the age of the forms of humanism and the age of anthropocentrism. Nevertheless it is paradoxically also the age of man's deepest anxiety

about his identity and his destiny, the age of man's abasement to previously unsuspected levels, the age of human values trampled on as never before.

How is this paradox explained? We can say that it is the inexorable paradox of atheistic humanism. It is the drama of man being deprived of an essential dimension of his being, namely, his search for the infinite, and thus faced with having his being reduced in the worst way. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* plumbs the depths of the problem when it says: "Only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

Thanks to the Gospel, the Church has the truth about man. This truth is found in an anthropology that the Church never ceases to fathom more thoroughly and to communicate to others. The primordial affirmation of this anthropology is that man is God's image and cannot be reduced to a mere portion of nature or a nameless element in the human city (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 12 and 14). This is the meaning of what Saint Irenaeus wrote: "Man's glory is God, but the recipient of God's every action, of his wisdom and of his power is man" (Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III 20, 2-3).

I made particular reference to this irreplaceable foundation of the Christian concept of man in my Christmas Message: "Christmas is the feast of man... Man is an object to be counted, something considered under the aspect of quantity... Yet at the same time he is a single being, unique and unrepeatable... somebody thought of and chosen from eternity, someone called and identified by his own name" (Christmas Message, 1).

Faced with so many other forms of humanism that are often shut in by a strictly economic, biological or psychological view of man, the Church has the right and the duty to proclaim the Truth about man that she received from her teacher, Jesus Christ. God grant that no external compulsion may prevent her from doing so. God grant, above all, that she may not cease to do so through fear or doubt, through having let herself be contaminated by other forms of humanism, or through lack of confidence in her original message.

When a Pastor of the Church proclaims clearly and unambiguously the Truth about man that was revealed by him who "knew what was in man" (Jn 2:25), he must therefore be encouraged by the certainty of doing the best service to the human being.

This complete truth about the human being constitutes the foundation of the Church's social teaching and the basis also of true

liberation. In the light of this truth, man is not a being subjected to economic or political processes; these processes are instead directed to man and are subjected to him.

Without doubt, this truth about man that the Church teaches will go out strengthened from this meeting of Pastors.

//

Signs and Builders of Unity

Your pastoral service of truth is completed by a like service of unity.

II.1. Unity among Bishops

Unity will be, first of all, unity among yourselves, the Bishops. "We must guard and keep this unity," the Bishop Saint Cyprian wrote in a moment of grave threats to communion between the Bishops of his country, "especially we Bishops who preside over the Church, in order to give witness that the Episcopate is one and indivisible. Let no one mislead the faithful or alter the truth. The Episcopate is one" (*De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, 6-8).

This unity of Bishops comes not from human calculations and strategy but from on high: from serving one Lord, from being animated by one Spirit, and from loving one and the same Church. It is unity resulting from the mission that Christ has entrusted to us, the mission that has been evolving on the Latin-American continent for almost half a millenium, and that you are carrying forward with stout hearts in times of profound changes as we approach the close of the second millennium of redemption and of the Church's activity. It is unity around the Gospel, the Body and Blood of the Lamb, and Peter living in his Successors; all of which are different signs, but all of them highly important signs, of the presence of Jesus among us.

What an occasion you have, dear Brothers, for living this unity of Pastors in this Conference! In itself it is a sign and result of an already existing unity; but it is also an anticipation and beginning of a unity that must be more and more close and solid. Begin your work in a climate of brotherly unity: even now let this unity be a component of evangelization.

II.2. Unity with priests, religious and faithful

Let unity among the Bishops be extended by unity with priests, religious and faithful. Priests are the immediate collaborators of

the Bishops in their pastoral mission, and their mission would be compromised if close unity did not reign between priests and Bishops.

Men and women religious are also especially important subjects of that unity. I well know the importance of their contribution to evangelization in Latin America in the past and in the present. They came here at the dawn of the discovery and accompanied the first steps of almost all the countries. They worked continuously here together with the diocesan clergy. In some countries more than half, in other countries the great majority, of the body of priests are religious. This would be enough to show how important it is here more than in other parts of the world for religious not only to accept but to seek loyally an unbreakable unity of aim and action with their Bishops. To the Bishops the Lord entrusted the mission of feeding the flock. To religious it belongs to blaze the trails for evangelization. It cannot be, it ought not to be, that the Bishops should lack the responsible and active, yet at the same time, docile and trusting collaboration of the religious, whose charism makes them ever more ready agents at the service of the Gospel. In this matter everybody in the ecclesial community has the duty of avoiding magisteria other than the Church's Magisterium, for they are ecclesially unacceptable and pastorally sterile.

The laity also are subjects of that unity, whether involved individually or joined in apostolic associations for the spreading of the Kingdom of God. It is they who have to consecrate the world to Christ in the midst of their daily duties and in their various family and professional tasks, in close union with and obedience to the lawful Pastors.

In line with *Lumen Gentium*, we must safeguard the precious gift of ecclesial unity between all those who form part of the pilgrim People of God.

III

Defenders and Promoters of Human Dignity

III.1. Those familiar with the Church's history know that in periods there have been admirable Bishops deeply involved in advancing and valiantly defending the human dignity of those entrusted to them by the Lord. They have always been impelled to do so by their episcopal mission, because they considered human dignity a Gospel value that cannot be despised without greatly offending the Creator.

This dignity is infringed on the individual level when due regard is not for values such as freedom, the right to profess one's religion, physical and mental integrity, the right to essential goods, to life... It is infringed on the social and political level when man cannot exercise his right of participation, or when he is subjected to unjust and unlawful coercion, or submitted to physical or mental torture, etc.

I am not unaware of how many questions are being posed in this sphere today in Latin America. As Bishops, you cannot fail to concern yourselves with them. I know that you propose to carry out a serious reflection on the relationships and implications between evangelization and human advancement or liberation, taking into consideration, in such a vast and important field, what is specific about the Church's presence.

Here is where we find, brought concretely into practice, the themes we have touched upon in speaking of the truth concerning Christ, the Church and man.

III.2. If the Church makes herself present in the defence of, or in the advancement of man, she does so in line with her mission, which, although it is religious and not social or political, cannot fail to consider man in the entirety of his being. The Lord outlined in the parable of the Good Samaritan the model of attention to all human needs (cf. Lk. 10:29 ff.), and he said that in the final analysis he will identify himself with the disinherited — the sick, the imprisoned, the hungry, the lonely — who have been given a helping hand (Mt 25:31 ff.) The Church has learned in these and other pages of the Gospel (cf. Mk 6:35-44) that her evangelizing mission has, as an essential part, action for justice and the tasks of the advancement of man (cf. final document of the Synod of Bishops, October 1971), and that between evangelization and human advancement there are very strong links of the orders of anthropology, theology and love (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31); so that "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take into account the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 29).

Let us also keep in mind that the Church's action in earthly matters such as human advancement, development, justice, the rights of the individual, is always intended to be at the service of man; and of man as she sees him in the Christian vision of the anthropology that she adopts. She therefore does not need to have recourse to ideological systems in order to love, defend and collaborate in

the liberation of man: at the centre of the message of which she is the depositary and herald she finds inspiration for acting in favour of brotherhood, justice, and peace, against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, violence, attacks on religious liberty and whatever attacks life (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 26, 27 and 29).

III.3. It is therefore not through opportunism nor thirst for novelty that the Church, "the expert in humanity" (Paul VI, Address to the United Nations, 4 October 1965) defends human rights. It is through a true *evangelical commitment*, which, as happened with Christ, is a commitment to the most needy. In fidelity to this commitment, the Church wishes to stay free with regard to the competing systems, in order to opt only for man. Whatever the miseries or sufferings that afflict man, it is not through violence, the interplay of power and political systems, but through the truth concerning man, that he journeys towards a better future.

III.4. Hence the Church's constant preoccupation with the delicate question of property. A proof of this is the writings of the Fathers of the Church through the first thousand years of Christianity (cf. St. Ambrose, *De Nabuthe*, c. 12, n. 53: PL 14, 747). It is clearly shown by the vigorous teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, repeated so many times. In our own times, the Church has appealed to the same principles in such far-reaching documents as the social Encyclicals of the recent Popes. With special force and profundity, Pope Paul VI spoke of this subject in his *Encyclical Populorum Progressio* (cf. nos. 23-24; cf. also *Mater et Magistra*, 1.06).

This voice of the Church, echoing the voice of human conscience and which did not cease to make itself heard down the centuries in the midst of the most varied social and cultural systems and conditions, deserves and needs to be heard in our time also, when the growing wealth of a few parallels the growing poverty of the masses.

It is then that the Church's teaching, according to which all private property involves a social obligation, acquires an urgent character. With respect to this teaching, the Church has a mission to carry out; she must preach, educate individuals and collectivities, form public opinion, and offer orientations to the leaders of the peoples. In this way she will be working in favour of society, within which this Christian and evangelical principle will finally bear the fruit of a more just and equitable distribution of goods, not only within each nation but also in the world in general, ensuring that the stronger countries do not use their power to the detriment of the weaker ones.

Those who bear responsibility for the public life of the States and nations will have to understand that internal peace and international peace can only be ensured if a social and economic system based on justice flourishes.

Christ did not remain indifferent in the face of this vast and demanding imperative of social morality. Nor could the Church. In the spirit of the Church, which is the spirit of Christ, and relying upon her ample and solid doctrine, let us return to work in this field.

It must be emphasized here once more that the Church's solicitude looks to the whole man.

For this reason, for an economic system to be just it is an indispensable condition that it should favour the development and diffusion of public education and culture. The more just the economy, the deeper will be the conscience of culture. This is very much in line with what the Council stated: that to attain a life worthy of man, it is not possible to limit oneself to *having more*; one must aspire to *being more* (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 35l).

Therefore, Brothers, drink at these authentic fountains. Speak with the language of the Council, of John XXIII, of Paul VI: it is the language of the experience, of the suffering, of the hope of modern humanity.

When Paul VI declared that development is "the new name of peace" (*Populorum Progressio*, 76), he had in mind all the links of interdependence that exist not only within the nations but also those outside them, on the world level. He took into consideration the mechanisms that, because they happen to be imbued not with authentic humanism but with materialism, produce on the international level rich people ever more rich at the expense of poor people ever more poor.

There is no economic rule capable of changing these mechanisms by itself. It is necessary, in international life, to call upon ethical principles, the demands of justice, the primary commandment which is that of love. Primacy must be given to what is moral, to what is spiritual, to what springs from the full truth concerning man.

I have wished to manifest to you these reflections which I consider very important, although they must not distract you from the central theme of the Conference: we shall reach man, we shall reach justice, through evangelization.

III.5. In the face of what has been said hitherto, the Church sees with deep sorrow "the sometimes massive increase of human rights violations in all parts of society and of the world... Who

can deny that today individual persons and civil powers violate basic rights of the human person with impunity: rights such as the right to be born, the right to life, the right to responsible procreation, to work, to peace, to freedom and social justice, the right to participate in the decisions that affect people and nations? And what can be said when we face the various forms of collective violence like discrimination against individuals and groups, the use of physical and psychological torture perpetrated against prisoners or political dissenters? The list grows when we turn to the instances of the abduction of persons for political reasons and look at the acts of kidnapping for material gain which attack so dramatically family life and the social fabric" (Message of John Paul II to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization on 2 December 1978: 30th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights) We cry out once more: Respect man! He is the image of God! Evangelize, so that this may become a reality; so that the Lord may transform hearts and humanize the political and economic systems, with man's responsible commitment as the starting point!

III.6. Pastoral commitments in this field must be encouraged through a correct Christian idea of liberation. The Church feels the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, the duty to help this liberation become firmly established (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 30); but she also feels the corresponding duty to proclaim liberation in its integral and profound meaning, as Jesus proclaimed and realized it (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31). Liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is, above all, liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by him". (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9). Liberation made up of reconciliation and forgiveness. Liberation springing from the reality of being children of God, whom we are able to call Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15); a reality which makes us recognize in every man a brother of ours, capable of being transformed in his heart through God's mercy. Liberation that, with the energy of love, urges us towards fellowship, the summit and fullness of which we find in the Lord. Liberation as the overcoming of the various forms of slavery and man-made idols, and as the growth of the new man. Liberation that in the framework of the Church's proper mission is not reduced to the simple and narrow economic, political, social or cultural dimension, and is not sacrificed to the demands of any strategy, practice or short-term solution (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 33).

To safeguard the originality of Christian liberation and the energies that it is capable of releasing, one must at all costs avoid any form of curtailment or ambiguity, as Pope Paul VI asked: "The Church would lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of libe-

ration would no longer have any originality and would easily be open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and political parties" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 32). There are many signs that help to distinguish when the liberation in question is Christian and when on the other hand it is based rather on ideologies that rob it of consistency with an evangelical view of man, of things and of events (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 35). They are signs drawn from the content of what the evangelizers proclaim or from the concrete attitudes that they adopt. At the level of content, one must see what is their fidelity to the word of God, to the Church's living Tradition and to her Magisterium. As for attitudes, one must consider what sense of communion they have with the Bishops, in the first place, and with the other sectors of the People of God; what contribution they make to the real building up of the community; in what form they lovingly show care for the poor, the sick, the dispossessed, the neglected and the oppressed, and in what way they find in them the image of the poor and suffering Jesus, and strive to relieve their need and serve Christ in them (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 8). Let us not deceive ourselves: the humble and simple faithful, as though by an evangelical instinct, spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the Church and when it is emptied of its content and is stifled with other interests.

As you see, the series of observations made by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the theme of liberation retains all its validity.

III.7. What we have already recalled constitutes a rich and complex heritage, which *Evangelii Nuntiandi* calls the Social Doctrine or Social Teaching of the Church (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 38). This teaching comes into being, in the light of the Word of God and the authentic Magisterium, from the presence of Christians in the midst of the changing situations of the world, in contact with the challenges that result from those situations. This social doctrine involves therefore both principles for reflection and also norms for judgment and guidelines for action (cf. *Octogesima Adveniens*, 4).

Placing responsible confidence in this social doctrine—even though some people seek to sow doubts and lack of confidence in it—to give it serious study, to try to apply it, to teach it, to be faithful to it: all this is the guarantee, in a member of the Church, of his commitment in the delicate and demanding social tasks, and of his efforts in favour of the liberation or advancement of his brothers and sisters.

Allow me therefore to recommend to your special pastoral attention the urgent need to make your faithful people aware of this social doctrine of the Church.

Particular care must be given to forming a social conscience at all levels and in all sectors. When injustices grow worse and poor increases distressingly, the social doctrine, in a form which is creative and open to the broad fields of the Church's presence, must be valuable instrument for formation and action. This holds good particularly for the laity: "it is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). It is necessary to avoid supplanting the laity and to study seriously just when certain forms of supplying for them retain their reason for existence. Is it not the laity who are called, by reason of their vocation in the Church, to make their contribution in the political and economic dimensions, and to be effectively present in the safeguarding and advancement of human rights?

IV

Some Priority Tasks

You are going to consider many pastoral themes of great significance. Time prevents me from mentioning them. Some I have referred to or will do so in the meetings with the priests, religious, seminarians and lay people.

IV.1 The themes that I indicate here have, for different reasons, great importance. You will not fail to consider them, among the many others that your pastoral farsightedness will indicate to you.

a) The Family: Make every effort to ensure that there is pastoral care for the family. Attend to this field of such primary importance in the certainty that evangelization in the future depends largely on the "domestic Church". It is the school of love, of the knowledge of God, of respect for life and for human dignity. The importance of this pastoral care is in proportion to the threats aimed at the family. Think of the campaigns in favour of divorce, of the use of contraceptive practices, and of abortion, which destroy society.

b) Priestly and religious vocations: In the majority of your countries, in spite of an encouraging awakening of vocations, the lack of vocations is a grave and chronic problem. There is a huge disproportion between the growing population and the number of agents important to the Christian community. Every community has to obtain its vocations, as a sign of its vitality and maturity. Intense pastoral activity must be reactivated, starting with the

Christian vocation in general and from enthusiastic pastoral care for youth, so as to give the Church the ministers she needs. Lay vocations, although they are so indispensable, cannot compensate for them. Furthermore, one of the proofs of the laity's commitment is an abundance of vocations to the consecrated life.

c) Youth: How much hope the Church places in youth! How much energy needed by the Church abounds in youth, in Latin America! How close we Pastors must be to the young, so that Christ and the Church and love of the brethren may penetrate deeply into their hearts.

Conclusion

At the end of this message I cannot fail to invoke once again the protection of the Mother of God upon your persons and your work during these days. The fact that this meeting of ours is taking place in the spiritual presence of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is venerated in Mexico and in all the other countries as the Mother of the Church in Latin America, is for me a cause for joy and a source of hope. May she, the "Star of evangelization", be your guide in your future reflections and decisions. May she obtain for you from her Divine Son:

— the boldness of prophets and the evangelical prudence of Pastors,

— the clearheadedness of teachers and the reliability of guides and directors,

— courage as witnesses, and the calmness, patience and gentleness of fathers.

May the Lord bless your labours. You are accompanied by select representatives: priests, deacons, men and women religious, lay people, experts and observers, whose collaboration will be very useful to you. The whole Church has its eyes on you, with confidence and hope. You intend to respond to these expectations with full fidelity to Christ, the Church, and humanity. The future is in God's hands, but in a certain way God places that future with new evangelizing momentum in your hands too. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Mt 28:19).

HAIL, MOTHER OF MEXICO, MOTHER OF LATIN AMERICA!

The opening of the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate took place on 27 January, with a concelebrated Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. After the Gospel, Pope John Paul II delivered the following homily.

Hail Mary!

1. Dear Brothers in the episcopate and dear sons and daughters, how deep is my joy that the first stops of my pilgrimage, as Successor of Paul VI and John Paul I, bring me precisely here. They bring me to you, Mary, in this shrine of the people of Mexico and of the whole of Latin America, the shrine in which for so many centuries your motherhood has been manifested.

Hail Mary!

It is with immense love and reverence that I utter these words, words so simple and at the same time so marvellous. No one will ever be able to greet you in a more wonderful way than the way in which the Archangel once greeted you at the moment of the Annunciation. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. I repeat these words, words that so many hearts ponder upon and so many lips utter throughout the world. We here present utter them together, and we are aware that these are the words with which God himself, through his messenger, greeted you, the woman promised in the Garden of Eden chosen from eternity as the Mother of the Word, the Mother of the Son of God.

Hail, Mother of God!

2. Your Son Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and Lord. He is our Teacher. All of us gathered here are his disciples. We are the Successors of the Apostles, of those to whom the Lord said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mt 28:19-20)

Gathered here together, the Successor of Peter and the successors of the Apostles, we ponder on how admirably these words have been fulfilled in this land.

In fact, scarcely twenty years after the work of evangelization was begun in the New World in 1492, the Faith reached Mexico. Soon afterwards, the first archiepiscopal see was established, presided over by Juan de Zumárraga, supported by other great evangelizers, who were to extend Christianity over very wide areas.

No less glorious religious epics were to be written in the Southern Hemisphere by men such as Saint Turibius of Mongroviejo and a long list of others who would deserve to be mentioned here at length. The paths of the Faith steadily stretched further, until at the end of the first century of evangelization the episcopal sees numbered more than seventy, with some four million Christians. This singular undertaking was to continue for a long time, until today, after five centuries of evangelization, it embraces almost a half of the entire Catholic Church, which has struck root in the culture of the people of Latin America and forms part of their own identity.

And with the achievement in these lands of Christ's mandate, with the multiplication everywhere of the children of divine adoption through the grace of baptism, the Mother appeared too. In fact, the Son of God, and your Son, from the Cross indicated a man to you, Mary, and said: "Behold, your son" (Jn 19:26). And in that man he entrusted everyone to you. And you, who at the moment of the Annunciation, concentrated the whole programme of your life in those simple words: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), embrace everyone, draw close to everyone, seek everyone out with motherly care.

Thus is accomplished what the last Council said about your presence in the mystery of Christ and the Church. In a wonderful way you are always found in the mystery of Christ, your only Son, because you are present wherever men and women, his brothers and sisters, are present, wherever the Church is present.

In fact, when the first missionaries who reached America from lands of eminent Marian tradition taught the rudiments of Christian faith, they also taught love for you, the Mother of Jesus and of all people. And ever since the time that the Indian Juan Diego spoke of the sweet Lady of Tepeyac, you, Mother of Guadalupe, have entered decisively into the Christian life of the people of Mexico. No less has been your presence in other places, where your children invoke you with tender names, as Our Lady of Alta-gracia, of the Aparecida, of Luján, and with many other no less affectionate names, not to give unending list — names by which

in each nation and even in each region the peoples of Latin America express their most profound devotion to you, and under which you protect them in their pilgrimage of faith.

The Pope — who comes from a country in which your images, especially one, that of Jasna Gora, are also a sign of your presence in the nation's life and its hazardous history — is particularly sensitive to this sign of your presence here, in the life of the People of God in Mexico, in its history, a history which has also been not easy, and at times even dramatic. But you are also equally present in the life of the many other peoples of Latin America, presiding over and guiding not only their past, whether remote or recent, but also the present moment, with its uncertainties and shadows. The Pope perceives in the depths of his heart the special bonds that link you with this people and this people with you. This people, that gives you the affectionate name of *La Morenita*. This people, and indirectly the whole of this vast continent, lives its spiritual unity thanks to the fact that you are its Mother. A Mother who, through her love, creates, preserves and increases closeness between her children.

Hail, Mother of Mexico!

Mother of Latin America!

3. We meet here at this exceptional and wonderful hour in the history of the world. We have come to this place, conscious that we are at a crucial moment. With this meeting of Bishops we wish to link ourselves with the previous Conference of the Latin-American Bishops that took place ten years ago at Medellín together with the Eucharistic Congress at Bogotá, which Pope Paul VI of indelible memory took part in. We have come here not so much to examine again, ten years later, the same problem, but rather to review it in a new way, at a new place and at a new moment of history.

We wish to take as our point of departure what is contained in the documents and resolution of that Conference. And at the same time we wish, on the basis of the experiences of the last ten years and of the development of thought and in the light of the experiences of the whole Church, to take a correct and necessary step forward.

The Medellín Conference took place shortly after the close of Vatican II, the Council of our century, and its objective was to take

up again the Council's essential plans and content, in order to apply them and make them a directing force in the concrete situation of the Church in Latin America.

Without the Council the Medellín meeting would not have been possible; that meeting was meant to be an impulse of spiritual renewal, a new "spirit" in the face of the future in full ecclesial fidelity in interpreting the signs of the times in Latin America. The evangelizing intention was quite clear. It is obvious in the sixteen themes dealt with, grouped about three great mutually complementary topics, namely human advancement, evangelization and growth in faith, and the visible Church and her structures.

By opting for the man of Latin America seen in his entirety, by showing preferential yet not exclusive love for the poor, and by encouraging integral liberation of individuals and peoples, Medellín, the Church present in that place, was a call of hope towards more Christian and more human goals.

But more than ten years have passed. And interpretations have passed. And interpretations have been given that have been at times contradictory, not always correct, not always beneficial for the Church. The Church is therefore looking for the ways that will enable her to understand more deeply and fulfil more zealously the mission she has been given by Christ Jesus.

Much importance in this regard is found in the sessions of the Synod of Bishops held in the years since then, especially the session of 1974, which concentrated on Evangelization; its conclusions were put together later, in a lively and encouraging manner, in Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

This is the theme that we are today placing before us for study by proposing to consider "Evangelization in Latin America's Present and Future".

As we meet in this sacred place to begin our work, we see before our eyes the upper room in Jerusalem, where the Eucharist was instituted. After the Lord's Ascension the Apostles returned to the same upper room in order to devote themselves to prayer, together with Mary, the Mother of Christ, and so prepare their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of the Church's birth.

That is also why we have come here. We also are awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit, who will make us see the paths of

evangelization by which the Church must continue and must be reborn in this great continent of ours. We also wish today and in the days ahead to devote ourselves to prayer with Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Master — with you, Mother of hope, Mother of Guadalupe.

4. Let me, John Paul II, Bishop of Rome and Pope, together with my Brothers in the Episcopate representing the Church in Mexico and the whole of Latin America, at this solemn moment entrust and offer to you, the handmaid of the Lord, the whole heritage of the Gospel, the Cross, and the Resurrection, of which we are all witnesses, apostles, teachers, and bishops.

O Mother, help us to be faithful stewards of the great mysteries of God. Help us to teach the truth proclaimed by your Son and to spread love, which is the chief commandment and the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. Help us to strengthen our brethren in faith, help us to awaken hope in eternal life. Help us to guard the great treasures stored in the souls of the People of God entrusted to us.

We offer you the whole of this People of God. We offer you the Church in Mexico and in the whole continent. We offer it to you as your own. You have entered so deeply into the hearts of the faithful through that sign of your presence constituted by your image in the Shrine of Guadalupe; be at home in these hearts, for the future also. Be at home in our families, our parishes, missions, dioceses, and in all the peoples.

Do this through the Holy Church for she, in imitation of you, Mother wishes in her turn to be a good mother and to care for souls in all their needs, by proclaiming the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, safeguarding family life with the sacrament of Matrimony, gathering all into the Eucharistic community by means of the Holy Sacrament of the altar, and by being lovingly with them from the cradle until they enter eternity.

O Mother, awaken in the youngest generation readiness for the exclusive service of God. Implore for us abundant local vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

O Mother, strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters in the laity, so that in every field of social, professional, cultural and political life they may act in accordance with the truth and the law brought by your Son to mankind, in order to lead everyone to eternal salvation and, at the same time, to make life on earth more human, more worthy of man.

The Church that is carrying out her task among the American nations, the Church in Mexico, wishes to serve this sublime cause with all her strength and with renewed missionary spirit. Mother, enable us to serve the Church in truth and justice. Make us follow this way ourselves and lead others, without ever straying along twisted paths and dragging others with us.

We offer and entrust to you everybody and everything for which we have pastoral responsibility, confident that you will be with us and will help us to carry out what your Son has told us to do (cf. Jn 2:5). We bring you this unlimited trust; with this trust I, John Paul II, with all my Brothers in the Episcopate of Mexico and Latin America, wish to bind you still more strongly to our ministry, to the Church and to the life of our nations. We wish to place in your hands the whole of our future, the future of evangelization in Latin America.

Queen of the Apostles, accept our readiness to serve unreservedly the cause of your Son, the cause of the Gospel and the cause of peace based on justice and love between individuals and peoples.

Queen of Peace, save the nations and peoples of the whole continent—they have so much trust in you—from wars, hatred and subversion.

Make everybody, whether they are rulers or subjects, learn to live in peace, educate themselves for peace, and do what is demanded by justice and respect for the rights of every person, so that peace may be firmly established.

Accept our trustful offering, O handmaid of the Lord. May your maternal presence in the mystery of Christ and of the Church become a source of joy and freedom for each and every one, source of that freedom through which "Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1), and in the end a source of that peace that the world cannot give but which is only given by him, by Christ (cf. Jn 14:27).

Finally, O Mother, recalling and confirming the gesture of my Predecessors Benedict XIV and Pius X, who proclaimed you Patroness of Mexico and of the whole of Latin America, I present to you a diadem in the name of all your Mexican and Latin-American children, that you may keep them under your protection, preserve their harmony in faith and their fidelity to Christ your Son. Amen.

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

The Holy Father addressed the following words to all the persons who on the morning of 25 January, had gathered at Fiumicino airport to wish him success on his first apostolic journey.

With all my heart I express to you my sincere thanks for your presence in this place, at the moment when, for some days, I am leaving my beloved diocese and Italy to go to Latin America.

This gesture of yours, so delicate and thoughtful, gives me comfort and is a serene augury for the success of the journey, which — as you know — wishes to be first and foremost a *pilgrimage of faith*. The Pope is going to kneel before the marvellous image of the Madonna of Guadalupe, in Mexico, to invoke her motherly assistance and her protection on his pontifical service; to say to her again, with a force increased by his immense new tasks: "Totus tuus sum Ego!", and to put in her hands the future of evangelization in Latin America.

The Pope, furthermore, is going to other areas of the New World as a *Messenger of the Gospel* for the millions of brothers and sisters who believe in Christ. He wants to know them, embrace them and tell them all — children, young people, men, women, workers, peasants, professionals — that God loves them, that the Church loves them, that the Pope loves them, and also he wants to receive from them the encouragement and example of their goodness, their faith. Ideally, therefore, the Pope follows in the wake of the missionaries, the priests, all those who, from the discovery of the New World, spread the message of Jesus with sacrifice, abnegation and generosity in those immense lands, preaching love and peace among men.

The pope, finally, is carrying out this journey to take part, together with his brother bishops, in the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate which will take place in Puebla. The Conference will deal with important problems concerning the

pastoral action of the People of God, which, in the light of the Second Vatican Council, must keep in mind the complex local socio-political situations in order to instill in them the fruitful ferments of the proclamation of the Gospel. The Pope will go to Puebla to help, to "strengthen" (cf. Lk 22:32) his brother bishops.

As I am preparing to undertake the flight, after greeting the Cardinal Secretary of State and the other cardinals who are here with him, I express my grateful appreciation to the Prime Minister of the Italian Government and to the civil and military authorities; I greet the Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps to the Holy See and the Ambassadors of Latin America, and all those who have come to wish me a good journey. I willingly bless you all.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio SALVATORI MODESTO, Vicario Generali diocesis Maasinensis, electo Auxiliari sacri Praesulis Dumaguettensis atque Episcopo titulo Margensi, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Quo aptius aeternae Dominici gregis sibi commissi saluti provideretur, petivit Venerabilis frater Epiphanius Surban Belmonte, Episcopus Dumaguettensis, ut Auxiliaris sibi daretur. Cum ergo te, dilecte fili, qui egregiis animi ingenique dotibus praestas, eidem officio exsequendo aptum existimaverimus, de sententia Venerabilis fratris Nostri S. dotibus praestas, eidem officio exsequendo aptum existimaverimus, de sententia Venerabilis fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, deque Nostra summa potestate te nominamus Auxiliarem sacrorum, quem diximus, Antistitis, datis iuribus obligationibusque impositis, sicut explicatur in Apostolicis Litteris — Ecclesiae Sanctae — a Paulo VI, Decessore Nostro, die VI mensis Augusti datis, anno MCMLXVI. Ut debita praeterea auctoritate apud Christianum populum fruaris, te titulo insignimus Margensis vacantis Ecclesiae, item cum iuribus et obligationibus congruis. Ad ordinationem autem tuam quod attinet, permittimus ut eam accipias a quolibet catholico Episcopo extra urbem Romam, cui duo assistant eiusdem ordinis viri consecratores, sic ut leges liturgicae praescribunt. Antea autem tuum erit catholicae fidei professionem facere, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, atque iusurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, ad statutas formulas, quas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittes, de more signatas sigillogue impressas. Te denique hortamur, dilecte fili, ut ad tuam respiciens dignitatem episcopalem ad tuaque, cum ea coniuncta, munere et obligationes. Deo fidas unice eius que Matri Castissimae quae sit tibi Mater, Magistra et Regina Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die duodecesimo mensis Decembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo octavo, Pontificatus Nostri primo.

JOSEPHUS CAPRIO
Substitutus

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton Apost.

NEW RECTOR OF COLEGIO FILIPINO

SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO INSTITUTIONE CATHOLICA

DECRETUM

Sacra Congregatio pro Institutione Catholica, designatione inspecta Excellentissimorum Episcoporum Insularum Philippinarum, ad normam Statutorum Pontificii Collegii-Seminarii Philippini de Urbe.

Reverendum Dominum CICERONEM TUMBOCON

Sacerdotem Archidioecesis Iarensis, et Protonotarium Apostolicum ex supernumeris

RECTOREM

eiusdem pii Instituti eligit atque constituit, cui igitur omnia iura et officia tribuuntur quibus ad normam iuris et iuxta Collegii leges munus augetur; contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Romae, ex aedibus Sacrae Congregationis pro Institutione Catholica, d.d. XIII m. ianuarii a.d. MCMLXXIX.

PRAEFECTUS

GABRIEL MARIA CARD. GARRONE

A SECRETIS

SER MONS. ANTONIO JAVANIERRE ORTAS, S.D.B.

PASTORAL LETTER

By

Most Rev. Juan C. Sison, D.D.
Archbishop of Nueva Segovia

To our beloved Clergy, Sisters and People of God:

In the wake of a significant change in the pastoral life of Nueva Segovia, and in the face of adjustments challenging the attention and effort of the Archdiocese, it is both my duty and joy to address you as Pastor of Nueva Segovia.

A TIDING OF GREAT JOY

Once again, the Good Lord has shown an unmistakable token of His magnanimity to Nueva Segovia. And it has fallen upon my happy lot to be the herald of this glad tiding. The Holy Father has honored our Presbyterium by choosing one of its illustrious members to be the new bishop of the Diocese of Laoag. He is the Most Rev. Edmundo M. Abaya, D.D.

OUR ACT OF THANKSGIVING

Joyfully contemplating this appointment, we call upon the Clergy and faithful to join us in offering to the High Priest fervent thanksgiving for this signal honor. Let us, in the unity of grateful joy, praise Him for this amazing grace; let us thank Him according to the multitude of His kindness.

At the same time, ecclesial sentiments urge us to express gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, who has been the kind instrument of this Lord's generosity to us. Undoubtedly, this signal act of love cannot but be an added motivation for us to maintain our unflinching adherence and loyalty to His Holiness, and to abide by his pastoral leadership in the substance and orientation of our pastorate.

A debt of gratitude must be paid, too, to our beloved Apostolic Nuncio, the Most Rev. Bruno Torpigliani, D.D. Upon his shoulders

rested the spade-work for this honor accorded to us as an Arch-diocese. His careful study and reflection of Nueva Segovia and its clergy undoubtedly carried the decisive weight in the selection of a bishop from our midst. Assuredly, to him must go our pledge to consolidate the pastoral initiative that helped Nueva Segovia to rate this distinction.

And if it be permitted us to be specific, what thanksgiving to the Lord and to the Church could be more appropriate, as it would be a thanksgiving that aptly corresponds to this particular grace, than

- for our priests individually to intensify their commitment to their priesthood;
- for our presbyterium as a whole to grow in the fraternal solidarity of shared visions and efforts in behalf of the flock;
- and for faithful to close ranks with their pastors in order to actualize pastoral initiatives towards building vigorous Christian communities;

so that the **People of God** in Nueva Segovia, Bishops, pastors and flock in tireless unity, can decisively engender that outpouring of the Spirit so demanded by the crucial needs of our times.

ILOCOS SUR — AGAIN A GIFT GIVER

Long has Ilocos Sur tacitly yearned and prayed for Providence to raise one of its sons to the service of the episcopate. The last bishop from Ilocos Sur, from Vigan to be exact, the Most Rev. Alfredo Verzosa of happy memory, was preconized in 1918 and, after virtuously rendering pioneering job as Bishop of Lipa, died a saintly death in Vigan in 1954. Sixty years after Bishop Verzosa's consecration and twenty five years after his demise, Ilocos Sur at last sees another son elevated to the episcopacy.

Thus the appointment of Bishop Abaya comes as the felicitous fulfillment of long-standing yearnings. At long last, Nueva Segovia, till now perennially receiving a bishop from other dioceses, can fulfill the honored role of giving a son as a gift to another diocese. In particular, Nueva Segovia now returns the favor to Laoag Diocese, which, in 1969, provided us an Auxliary Bishop in the person of the person of the Most Rev. Victorino C. Ligot, now the present Ordinary of San Fernando, La Union.

BISHOP ABAYA, HAIL and FAREWELL

In behalf of Nueva Segovia and of our beloved Auxiliary Bishop Salvador L. Lazo, D.D. and of our own, let us extend heart-sprung congratulations to Bishop Abaya. Doubtless, the heart of the Archdiocese throbs with the hope-filled prayer that he will richly actualize the hopes pinned on him by the Church in general and by the Diocese of Laoag in particular. A priest of such exceptional talent, energy and charm, cannot but fruitfully fulfill the delicate role so anxiously entrusted into his capable hands. In him, Nueva Segovia loses a soldier that it can hardly afford to lose. But what Nueva Segovia loses, the Church gains!

Incidentally, it is an honor for our Cathedral in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, to be the venue of Bishop Abaya's episcopal ordination, which has been set on the 19th of January 1979, his very natal day. Decidedly, St. Paul's Cathedral will be a meaningful setting for this event. It has been, the church under the care of Bishop Abaya when his appointment came. Under his charge, the Cathedral has undergone massive face-lifting, so that, recapturing its original luster, it now sparkles as good as new. The restoration of the pipe-organ, his pet project is underway and will be ready to provide the musical background for his memorable day.

Meanwhile, we are designating 27 December 1978 to be the final Priests' Assembly for the current year, which will be held in the Parish House of San Vicente, Ilocos Sur. In valediction to his comrades-in-arms, whose respect for his performance as President of our Priests' Assemblies is matched only by their affection for his brotherly charm as person, Bishop Abaya will preside over this Assembly for the last time.

ADJUSTMENTS AHEAD

With the regretted departure of Bishop Abaya from our ranks, our presbyterium now faces the challenge of adjustment. Orphaned of his irreplaceable service as worthy President of our Priests' Assemblies, we shall have to cast about for a successor. Hence, we designate the first Priests' Assembly of the incoming year for this task. And on this matter, we wish to initiate a slight change on the calendaring of our Assemblies. Instead of starting in

February, our Assemblies will start in January, so that the final Assembly of the year will fall in November. Experience indicates that December is too busy a month for an Assembly.

Once we shall have chosen a new President, our Assemblies will take steps to organize, coordinate and implement, the several pastoral plans presented in the Priests' Assembly of 13 Oct. 1978.

In the meantime, then, kindly allow me to enjoin our presbyterium to adequately reflect and take careful stock of our present situation, so that the pastoral momentum now prevalling, will far from slackening, keep on.

Then too, we earnestly request our faithful and in a particular way, our Religious Sisters, to offer prayers and penances for their clergy. The perseverance and fervor of our clergy is in direct proportion to your prayers for whose perseverance we can never pray enough.

Godspeed, Bishop Abaya! May the admonition of St. Paul, to Bishop Timothy, keep on ringing in your ears: "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands." (2nd Timothy I. 6). Continue to inspire us whom you leave behind, that more may tread the priestly trails you have blazed and, perhaps, reach too the eminence you have attained. We will keep you in our own prayers.

Vigan, Ilocos Sur

December 17, 1978, 3rd Sunday of Advent

Pontifical Council for the Laity

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

PASTORAL CARE OF CHILDREN

By its very nature the vocation of man, seen in a Christian perspective, has an eternal dimension. Man only reaches his fullness in eternal glory (L.G. 48).

But it would be mistaken to view human existence just as a sequence or accumulation of different phases of one's life. That fullness and that eternity towards which all men tend throughout their temporal life are already present in embryonic form, and in expectation, right at the very beginning of this life, and hence from man's very earliest childhood.

From the beginning of his existence, and for all time, the child is the image of God. He is a human being endowed with the dignity of the human person, the purpose and the full significance of his destiny as man, and as a created being and even more so as a child of God, called by Him to share in His life.

We know that all fatherhood in heaven and on earth springs from the only Father, God (Eph. 3, 5). The same can also be said of all sonship in heaven and on earth, which has its source in the unique Sonship of the Divine Word engendered by the Eternal Father. It is therefore quite impossible to fully grasp what is meant by sonship without making reference to this divine source and origin.

Our Lord has shown children to be the prototype of all those to whom the Kingdom of Heaven belongs (Mt. 19, 14). The distinctive features of the child are also those in which certain eternal values are to be discerned. The child reveals his trust in everyone and everything that he comes into contact with. He opens up readily to others. The child is free, harbouring no prejudices about any

idea or any project. The child harbours untarnished hope within him, ready to lend a helping hand even to the most insignificant things, for they stand before him as having an infinite value, just as each being has a unique value to God, by being participants in His Creation.

The fact of having experienced trust, love and hope during childhood plays a decisive role throughout a man's life, without any doubt. This not only applies to the temporal plane, but also to the religious plane. Convictions acquired in childhood are of particular importance in the Christian religion, understood and lived as a relationship between man and a God who is his Father.

The person who has learned the fullness of what is meant by 'Father' and 'Mother' as synonyms of charity and security in his childhood, is more easily able to keep faith in God-the-Father.

I. FUNDAMENTAL APPROACHES OF THE CHURCH TO CHILDHOOD

1) *Biblical and theological basis*

The Church finds basis and inspiration of all her activity on behalf of children essentially in the Bible and theology, serving as the basis and the inspiration of the Message she has to offer the world in this regard.

The following are some of the most important basic elements supplied by Holy Scripture:

- fertility, a sign of divine favour (Prov. 17, 6; Ps. 128, 3, etc.)
- God, the protector of the orphan, the weak, the innocent the advocate in defense of their rights and the judge who meets out justice to them (Ex. 22, 21; Ps 68,6);
- children as the recipients and messengers of God's Revelation (1 S 1-3; 1 S 16, 1-3; Dt 13, 44-50; Is 9, 1-6);
- the Son of God taking upon Himself the state of childhood (Lk 2, 12; 2, 27; 2, 43-51);
- children: the 'blessed', preferred of the Lord (Mk 10-16);
- children: symbol of the true disciple (Mt 19, 14; Mk 10, 15; Mt 18, 3-4; Mt 11, 25 ...);
- rejection of childishness, and the need to grow in the Lord (1 Co 3, 1 et seq; 13-11; 14, 20; Heb 5, 11-14; 1P 2,2).

2) *The Child and the Tradition of the Church*

The Church has a special authority for speaking out on the well-being of children. Throughout the whole course of history, she has always been concerned with helping them, leading them onwards, as can be seen from the numberless undertakings and the most disparate activities she has fostered on their behalf:

- teaching, welfare, charity, protection, moral and religious education;
- aid to promote and sanctify the family;
- defending the supreme value of life against all forms of infanticide;
- founding schools, hospitals, children's canteens, nurseries, parish play-schools, etc. . . .

It has been the same concern that has led the bishops to examine the problem of catechesis at the last Synod, and particularly the catechesis of infants and youth, in order to grasp the full value of this essential and precious gift of the Church, and to hand it on to others — namely, the **Faith**.

All of this activity is not to be seen as a reason for feeling pleased with ourselves. One must remember that it is the result of a twofold demand made us of: first, to be faithful to the Message of Christ who had a predilection for childhood, and secondly, to act in accordance with the conviction that children form an integral part of the People of God.

To emphasize the particular attention that the Church devotes to childhood, it would be useful to collect the vast wealth of the teachings of the Magisterium on this subject, as expressed on so many occasions, and specially those of the Holy Father. It would also be useful to draw up an inventory of all the many activities that are being undertaken in this field at local Church and ICO level and to publicize, them.

It is therefore quite natural for the Church to devote special attention to the Child during the International Year of the Child. But her concern is not a once-only matter: above and beyond the opportunities of this kind that are offered, and the enthusiasm of any given moment, the Church's desire and intention is to promote ongoing, permanent programmes designed to benefit children.

3) *Children in the world of today*

It is equally fundamental to respect children as human persons, with their own peculiar ways of being and living. This child learns to know himself, his environment and to develop his own potential

and to enter into relationships with his parents, his fellow children and with God, through his own original experiences. Through these experiences the child expresses the needs and the requirements of all human persons, in his own particular fashion: things such as life (when he encounters death that threatens his weakness), love (loving and being loved, when he encounters anything that sets its face against brotherly reciprocity and communion), freedom when he encounters any kind of manipulation and enslavement), Civil and moral advancement, by improving the living conditions of individuals, families and nations, enables society to meet these demands for life, love and freedom more easily. However, the various kinds of sin which in different ways embody the sin "which has entered the world" (Rom 5, 12) and which is contradictory to the Message of Jesus Christ, repudiate these demands and prevent them from being satisfied. These sins include, inter alia, personal or collective selfishness which is a threat to parents themselves, and to the quality of their relationships with their children, the break-up of the family, abortion, hunger and malnutrition, material and moral poverty, lack of health-care services and educational or welfare facilities, depersonalizing and destabilizing forms of development, pollution of the natural and the human environment, wars, violence, etc.

"Despite technological progress," said Pope Paul VI recently to the executive director of Unicef (at the Audience on 28 June 1978), "children continue to suffer and to die for lack of basic food-stuffs, or they are victims of violence and armed conflict which they do not even understand. Others are victim of withheld affection. There are those who poison the minds of children and instill vacuous ideologies and prejudice into them. And today, children are being exploited to the point of being used to satisfy the beset depravity of adults." People sometimes even come to see children as a burden or a stumbling-block in the way of their parents' freedom, instead of considering them as the expression of their love, or even deny the child the right to membership of a lawfully constituted family, by actually preventing them from being born or occasioning their death.

The Church has to denounce everything that causes suffering to children, everything that makes them innocent, defenceless victims. She must stand up as the sign and pledge of a better world, because she is the sign of the preferential love of God.

4) *The growth of children: educational demands*

In the allocution referred to earlier, Pope Paul VI declared that the child must be welcomed, considered and respected "as a child, as a human person, and not as a potential adult. Childhood is an

essential stage in human life, and every child has the right to live his childhood to the full and to make an original contribution to the humanization of society, and to its development and renewal." The child must be valued for the capabilities which are proper to him, — capacities of which society is in need; he must be viewed as a partner with a full part to play in the various communities to which he may belong. This does not mean that the Church believes in an illusory 'messianism' of childhood: she knows that the child is not yet a mature being, that he needs to 'grow' in both human and Christian terms and that this can only be done in the presence of adults who must guide and support the child. The child is also marked by sin. This is why he must be loved by his parents and teachers, corrected and accompanied by them without, however, becoming a 'cult-figure' encouraging him to lord it over his family, his friends or the adults around him.

The Church does not advocate paternalism or the kind of welfare that would stifle the child's chances of development and integration, or a form of irresponsible "liberalism", or tyrannical 'dirigisme'. She is well aware of the fact that a balance must be struck to enable children to become active subjects of their own development without cutting short the period of childhood by expecting children to give what they are as yet incapable of giving, or by making them undertake adult responsibilities.

II. THE CHURCH'S PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

On the basis of these basic and inseparable approaches, the Church is able to suggest, accept and develop specially-designed plans and activities on behalf of children, or to take part in plans and activities worked out by others.

- 1) *Development of ecclesial environments in which the child can discover what he needs for his human and spiritual growth.*
 - a) *The family.* As the natural and ideal environment in which life, growth in love, development and harmonization of freedoms can best be respected in communion, the family is the privileged place for the balanced and integral development of the child. Viewed as the "Domestic Church", the family is also the place for catechesis, in which one learns to live the evangelical values together and to pray in common. The church performs a pre-eminent service of cooperation for the good of the child by founding the family

on a sacrament, and by sanctifying it and defending it against anything that threatens its unity, its communion and its specific purpose.

One can hardly fail to recall the words of *Gaudium et Spes* (N. 52): "The family is the place in which several generations meet together to help one another to acquire greater wisdom." This idea was taken further by Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation '*Evangelii Nuntiandi*' (N. 71): "Parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but they can also receive the Gospel from them, lived in depth."

- b) *The parish.* Through the services it provides, the parish is the place in which children come into contact with the wider ecclesial community: through catechesis, the sacraments — baptism, confirmation, penance, the Eucharist — through taking part in the liturgical life and the other parish activities and meetings for children.
- c) *The Catholic School.* Through the human and Christian education which the Catholic school gives to children, it enables them to assimilate and gradually become imbued with the cultural and religious 'tradition' of the Church, and thereby to receive an 'integral formation'.
- d) *Apostolic movements for children.* Through these, children receive their formation and development under the guidance of adult leaders and 'animators'. "Children likewise have an apostolic activity of their very own to perform. To the extent of their possibilities, they are the living witnesses to Christ amongst their fellow children" (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, N. 12).
- e) One should also consider all the other aspects of society which, for better or for worse, exercise a profound and incisive influence over children, and especially through the mass media, — particularly television — and through the values and counter-values which different types of human behavior manifest. The Church must also speak out with regard to these. She must foster actions to defend the rights of the child, preventing and denouncing anything which is likely to hold children in contempt or be a cause of scandal to them (Mt 18, 6-10).

2) *Support for those working on behalf of children in the Church*

It may be a good idea at this point to mention that the pastoral coordination and planning of all the institutions should be encouraged (the family, parish, school, apostolic movements, Catholic Press and other services ...) whose members play a frontline role in educating children.

First and foremost we should mention viewing the child and children amongst themselves as agents, and keep a watchful eye on the process of their own development, an open ear to what they have to say about what they think, and do everything to encourage the integral development of their human and spiritual possibilities.

Parents — in the strict and the wide sense of the term — must be encouraged and stimulated to perform this educational role within the setting of the life of the family, and greater numbers of them should be encouraged to become lay catechists to children and be given more thorough training. This involves getting families to co-operate more closely together, by running meetings and groups for parents, etc.

Outside the family setting, the Church also has a good number of educators: priests, religious, lay teachers and leaders. One must give due recognition to the service that they perform on behalf of and together with children, and encourage them to serve in the schools, parishes, movements, clubs, guilds, hospitals, holiday camps and centres, mass media, etc. ...

3) *Charity operating on behalf of all children, to bring them integral development, enabling them to become the sign and the leaven for the construction of a new world*

This charity involves:

- a) defending and promoting children's rights, particularly those regarding respect for life (before and after birth), their demands, their need of love and freedom, to ensure the balanced growth of all their human possibilities.
- b) denouncing in prophetic fashion today's 'social' sin which deprives a scandalous number of children of the material and moral conditions that are vital for the harmonious development and the dignity to which all the children of God are called.
- c) encouraging anything that is being done on behalf of abandoned children, orphans, the physically and mentally handi-

capped, of those in dire need of anything else, those who suffer as a result of natural or social disasters, to make them effective witnesses of the freely-given Love of God.

- d) ensuring that the Authorities promote and give effective backing to schemes to help children, as the sign and yardstick by which to measure the 'moral health' of a society. They must be encouraged to develop a family policy, in particular, respecting the family, helping it and supporting it as the basic cell in the social fabric.
- e) denouncing to the public authorities and those in charge of the mass media any instance of children being manipulated as tools for dehumanized or degrading purposes, such as for pornographic publications, to put an end to this scandal.
- f) endeavoring to rediscover the values that rightfully belong to childhood (innocence, imagination, the joy of communicating, pure affection shared spontaneously with others, open-heartedness, trusting and loving obedience to their elders, continual questioning and seeking for the 'sense' of things — that tireless quest to find out 'why?' ...) in the face of the trend towards the 'massification', the bureaucratization and the materialism of society leading to the levelling down and stifling of all the wealth of human potential.
- g) always bearing in mind that all children — whether healthy or handicapped, sick, maladjusted — are entitled to receive a catechetical formation.
- h) projecting the image of a new society based on the world of children, that will lead towards a 'civilization of love'.

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"

(A Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy On the Life of the Unborn Child)

Introduction

- 1 The United Nations has declared the year 1979 as the International year of the Child. The late Pope Paul VI gave recognition to this event in his allocutio of June 28, 1978, 15th anniversary of his elevation to the Pontificate.
- 2 In the declaration of the United Nations, the right of the unborn child has been ignored. In view of this Pope John Paul II, in several of his speeches, focused attention on the basic human right of the unborn child: his right to live.
- 3 In communion, therefore, with the mind and heart of the Holy Father, and shocked by the UN statistical report that more than 50 million abortions are procured each year,* we, the Bishops of the Philippines, hereby declare the year 1979 The Year of the Unborn Child. We focus on the right of the unborn child, with a deep sense of urgency, because abortion is now widespread and a shocking reality in our country too, both in the rural and in the urban areas.

Abortion in the Philippine Setting

- 4 In a rural sampling — admittedly inadequate — one out of six mothers have already undergone abortion at least once; about a half approve abortion and more than one-half of the said mothers believe abortion to be licit. (Philippine Population Program, FHC, Washington, D.C.)
- 5 Some physicians, by profession committed to the defense of life, have become agents of death in destroying foetal human life. Others have maintained discreet silence over abortion perpetrated by medically untrained practioners, popularly known as "hilots".
- 6 A good number of clinics and hospitals, all over the country, are notorious for their being slaughter-houses of unborn children.

* Demography Yearbook (U.N. Statistical Office)

- 7 While abortion is contrary to our civil laws, public authorities have accepted the inclusion of abortion in the training of public health officials, have permitted the entry of sophisticated instruments of abortion into the country, continue the spread of abortifacient IUDs and encourage the promotion of abortifacient injectibles.
- 8 The Mass Media have been instrumental in dissentinizing public opinion to look within indifference on abortion and in numbing sensitivities to the abomination of the crime.

Environmental Factors

- 9 Leading to this sad situation are the following factors:

1. *Contraceptive drive*: Anti-life in intent, it has created the anti-life mentality in our people, with a built-in intolerance for failure. Logically and irreversibly it leads to radical measures such as sterilization and then abortion. Unless stopped, the Contraceptive Drive in the long run will lead our society to the eventual acceptance of euthanasia or mercy-killing.

2. *Violence*, as a pattern, lowers the esteem for life. Kidnappings, forcible ejection of the poor and the powerless, sudden disappearance of people, torture and many others are not always reported in the newspapers, but they are common knowledge. In a climate that devaluates life, what chances do the helpless have, whose lives have just begun, powerless to cry out in protest?

3. *Manipulation* breaks down esteem for people as human beings. It is now subtly structured into our own social and health services. In the case of industrial physicians, government workers like midwives, nurses and medical health officers; and in the training programs for them, there are manipulative practices that violate conscience and hamper the exercise of one's freedom. (Dr. Vicente Rosales on the Philippine Population Program, April 18, 1978)

4. *Discrimination* in setting price tags on human lives. Some lives are more valuable than others. The unconditional value due to every human life is thereby destroyed. Thus the deformed and the handicapped become candidates for sterilization and abortion. Every child is merely a consumer and can be looked upon as a liability to our society and hence, may become unwanted.

This outlook on life is reflected in the system of priorities set up by financial institutions. Thus, more funds are allocated

for hotels, amusement resorts and parks at the expense of the real needs of our people: such as hospitals, leprosaria, and mental institutions, school buildings and facilities.

5. *Commercial Trafficking* of people reduces them to the level of products for consumption. We make much of the beauty and grace of the Filipina. But is this to make the exploitation of her flesh in the tourist market, more enticing?

All these factors lead to the devaluation and eventual disregard of human life. This is a tragedy. But a deeper tragedy is the gradual extinction of the capacity to love and to care. Every refusal to accept new life is a refusal to love. And this dying of unselfish love in the heart of man, constitutes a most serious crisis in our society today.

Doctrinal Portion

- 10 The whole of mankind bears constant testimony to the sacredness of human life not only after birth but from its inception. Man in fact is born with this reverence for life, for nature has imbedded in his heart an instinct of reverence for new human life. This instinct is a distinctive trait of man, and history testifies how people who smothered this instinct lapsed into degradation.
- 11 The earliest recorded laws enacted by men attest to this profound reverence for human life from the first known moments of its presence. The Sumerian (2000 BC) and the Assyrian (1500 BC) Codes protected foetal life from abortion with most severe sanctions. We could say that the Geneva Declaration for Physicians in 1949, proclaiming "I will preserve the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception" is a clear echo of the Hipocratic Oath in a symphony of human reverence for life in all its stages.
- 12 Neither was this reverence for life an empty doctrine. It carried with it the severest sanctions that were enshrined in the laws of civilized nations.
- 13 The sad fact that lately some nations deviated from this universally felt reverence for life, to the extent of approving abortion, only proves the presence of evil and good in this world. Falsehood and evil could prevail, at least for some time, over truth and virtue. Moreover, as stated above, skillful manipulation by some organized groups could distort issues and create an

environment that could present a moral evil as a desirable economic good. Moreover, wherever abortion has been approved and practised, in defiance of nature and of God's law, it did not take long before the evil seed contained in this practice, surfaced with disastrous results, prompting responsible leaders and peoples to admit their humiliating error.

14 This universal pro-life conviction deriving from reason and from the natural instinct of man finds its fullest basis and support in God's command: "Thou shalt not kill." This law of God somehow found its place in all human codes of conduct.

15 The Church, on the other hand, has consistently applied this divine law to human life in all its stages. Through her whole history, the Church has regarded reverence for human life as a divine command and with unequivocal insistence applied it to human life at its inception. This is reflected in her constant teaching and in her Canon Law which punishes with excommunication those who practise and participate in abortion. This is reflected in her Liturgy enjoining that aborted foetus be baptized as a human person. She reminds us that human life has something divine in it, "for human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone, ... but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of man." (Church in the World Today, #51) With uncompromising firmness she declares the nobility of transmitting life and condemns abortion saying: "God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes." (Church in the World Today, #51) This clear teaching of the Catholic Church is taken up in a chorus of voices representing not only Christian religions but all major religious yesterday, today and always.

Action to be Taken

16 After reviewing the situation on life in the light of history, reason and Faith, we your Pastors feel that there is an urgency for everyone to get involved in the fight for life, especially for the life of the unborn.

17 Therefore, we would like to appeal to our people who in the past had always shown deep respect and reverence for the sacredness of life:

- * We appeal to responsible public officials to see to it that government official policies on respect for human life are consistently implemented in all levels. We commend those who, in spite of all kinds of pressures, courageously stand by their convictions.
- * We appeal to parents, especially to mothers, to treasure the new life as a gift from God. We commend especially those who, having less of material comforts, are more generous and self-sacrificing in embracing life — sometimes at the cost of terrible embarrassment.
- * We appeal to physicians, nurses and midwives to be always faithful to their sacred oath and to live out the courage of their moral conviction. We commend those who do not compromise the integrity of their profession even under harrassment and persecution.
- * We appeal to all teachers and school officials to be more dedicated to their vocation as real educators. We commend those who stand by their conscience in imparting human values and attitudes to the youth in spite of questionable incentives.
- * We appeal to those who care for the physically, mentally and socially handicapped to be more patient and selfless in their work. We commend those dedication is an inspiration for greater respect for life itself.
- * We appeal to the vast majority of the population — our youth — to take life seriously. We commend with admiration the courage of those who are able to resist the pressures of being exploited for anti-life propaganda.
- * We appeal to the Mass Media to respect the delicate sensitivities of our people in forming public opinion. We commend those who, in spite of the allure of money, fearlessly communicate the truth about life.

18 In this Year of the Unborn Child, our attention is directed to the abuses against life, to the anti-natalist attitude from which these abuses arise, and to the atmosphere which makes these abuses possible. Does not the future, therefore, look dark for the child, especially the unborn in our country? We would despair did we not have the eyes of Faith to perceive other realities that awaken hope.

- 19 We already cited and commended the different sectors of our society which have stood and continue to stand for life in spite of overwhelming odds. And there are many others whose lives we may overlook but in whom respect for life is very much alive. But all these proclaim the hope that in this Year of the Unborn Child the commitment to life will find its roots in our people.

Conclusion

- 20 Throughout this year, let us continually reflect on how Jesus identified himself with the life of all men. Let us reflect on how He chose to be particularly identified with those lives that are at the mercy of others, with the helpless, the defenseless, the children whom he loved and invited: "Suffer the little children to come to me for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. 19:14) Let us reflect on how His own life in its caring demanded sacrifice. And finally, let us reflect on how all sacrifice in the caring of every human life, is a sharing in the mystery of Him who called Himself Life (Jn. 11:25).

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference
of the Philippines:

(Sgd.) † JAIME CARDINAL L. SIN
President

THE CRY OF THE CHILD

Today my mother learned I am alive. I had been eagerly looking forward to this day, a day I expected to be one of surprise and joy to my mother. But how disappointing for me. The news served only to disturb mother: I strongly felt her disturbance. And I cannot understand it: am I a disturbance? Besides being confused, I am also hurt. And also, somewhat in fear.

I have been hearing things. I hear that not all babies are wanted. Some are not-wanted. More and more are becoming not-wanted babies. Am I a not-wanted baby? There are so many things my parents have to contend with today that affect their taking me for a wanted baby, or rejecting me as not-wanted.

For one thing: they have to contend with that magic number: the QUOTA. They say that is the secret to the progress of the country. Am I a quota-baby? Or an excess-quota-baby? My parents will be penalized if I exceed the quota: in their income tax, maternity leave, health and social services, and what not. Should an excess-quota-baby feel utterly useless?

If I have a cousin, also about my age. She is clearly a not-wanted baby. But her situation is different: her mother and father are not married, are not sure they want to be married. She will have to go; they are just waiting for the right time. In the meanwhile, I know what question keeps buzzing in her head: am I really *the* problem?"

As for myself, I still feel insecure. I do not know what wrestling goes on within mother. Many mothers now feel the choice is theirs to keep a baby or kill him. Will mother keep me, or choose to have me killed? They now make it easier for her to choose the killing. For one thing, there are such pleasantly sounding names for the killing, such as "termination of pregnancy," or "menstrual

regulation". They do not disturb you with the word "killing", or even enlighten you. For another, they have improved the techniques to make the operation "aesthetically acceptable".

And then, the executioners can feel so safe. There are criminals that the law will hunt, place under surveillance, arrest, then prosecute. For instance, carnappers, kidnappers for ransom, income tax evaders, "jueteng" operators, and such like. But not the abortionists. And this is what makes me feel so insecure!"

Will I survive? The question that really bothers me is: *what are babies for?*

And oh, this may be of interest. After my father learned the news, he had himself sterilized. They induced him with incentives, such as official leave with pay. They assumed father could not exercise self-control. I pity him. After all, he is my father.

PAPAL GUIDELINES AT PUEBLA

By

Fr. Joseph M. de Torre

The Church's Commitment to Social Justice and Human Liberation

On Sunday, 28 January 1979, Pope John Paul II delivered an address in Spanish to the Latin American bishops gathered at Puebla, Mexico, for their III General Conference¹.

He reminded them that they were gathered there as Shepherds of the Church, and so, as Teachers of the Truth, not a *human* truth but the truth that comes from God, and which they have to apply to their situation. This demands first of all *fidelity* to that Truth:

- The truth about Jesus Christ, whose *divinity* is the starting point of our faith, and as such cannot be questioned by us believers.
- The truth about the Church founded by Him, whose strictly *supernatural* mission cannot be jeopardized by compromises with post-christian ideologies, or commitments to *concrete* options in the social, political and economic field.
- The truth about man, who is "the recipient of every action of God, of His wisdom, and of His power" (St. Irenaeus).

This fidelity to the Truth is the basis for the *unity* among the bishops, and of these with the priests and with the rest of the faithful. *Purity of doctrine* is therefore a top priority.

A Christian Anthropology

The Church has a philosophy of man, a christian anthropology:

"The Church, thanks to the Gospel, possesses the truth about man. This is found in an anthropology which the Church does not cease to deepen and communicate. The basic statement of this anthropology is that *man is the image of God*, irreducible to a simple chunk of nature or to an anonymous element of the earthly city...

¹ Quotations are my own translation from the original published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 January 1979. Italics are also mine.

"Human dignity is an *everlasting value* which cannot be despised without great offense to the Creator...

"I know that you intend to undertake a serious reflection on the mutual relations and implications of *evangelization* and *human promotion*² or *liberation*, and that you will, in such a wide and important field, consider what is *specific* in the Church's involvement...

"If the Church gets involved in the defense or promotion of man's dignity, she does so in line with her mission. Although this mission is of a *religious* nature, not social or political, she cannot but consider man in the *integrity of his being*..."

This metaphysical³ statement deserves careful attention. When other sciences look at man, they only see a partial aspect of him, and consequently cannot make any meaningful statement about *man as such*, about what is *good* for man as such. Only metaphysics looks at the whole *being* of man.

The answer to the metaphysical question *What is man?* is the starting point of any anthropology, but the trouble with post-christian anthropologies is that they start from a reduction of being to man (man is the encompasser of being, not the other way round), since they are man-centered, unlike the pre-christian and Catholic anthropologies, which are metaphysical, and therefore being-centered and God-founded.

Those post-christian anthropologies tend by their very dynamics to reduce man to one of his aspects only: from *homo sapiens*⁴ to *homo faber*, as if the *whole* being of man were reduced to his work and activity. From *homo faber* to *homo politicus*, as if the *whole* being of man were reduced to his being-in-society without anything beyond it. And finally, from *homo politicus* to *homo oeconomicus*, as if the *whole* being of man reduced to his materiality, the most abject of these reductions: if man does not come from God, he must come from matter, and ultimately go back to it with-

² This was the theme approved for this Conference by Pope Paul VI, and ratified by both John Paul I and the present Pope.

³ Metaphysics is the knowledge of *being* as such, the only knowledge, therefore, which serves as bridge between man and God.

⁴ *Sapientia*, wisdom, is *Sophia* in Greek, and the "love of wisdom" or supreme knowledge is *Philo-sophia*. The Catholic Faith is the acceptance of Incarnated Wisdom (Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God), communicated to us through divine revelation and communion, and transcending all *human* philosophies, i.e. bringing whatever truth they have to its final perfection.

out anything personal and transcendent. The consequence of these reductions is that the dignity of man is left without its foundation, which is his *divine filiation*.

The being of man is 100% *religious*, i.e., related to God, since God is his First Cause and Last End, so that the difference between man and animals is that man has the power to know God through his intelligence and love Him through his will. Animals are incapable of praying.

The Church is the strongest force for *civilization*⁵, i.e., for the flight from the jungle and the establishment of lasting institutions, such as the family, as springboards for human progress because she takes man "in the integrity of his being", while recognizing the *rightful* areas of autonomy of specific aspects of this being of man, which can certainly be *distinguished* in him but not separated, let alone considered as the whole being of man.

While man is 100% related to God, he is only *partly* related to other men (social aspect), *partly* related to the State or organized society (political aspect), and *partly* related to the material things of the world (economic aspect). But it would be monstrous to *reduce* man to one of those aspects or to any combination of them. And doubtless the most degrading kind of reduction is the economic one of Marxism, which inspired also the pre-marxist liberal economists, and is still the blight of capitalism.⁶

That the social, political and economic fields have rightful areas of autonomy no one can question, and this is the basis for the doctrine on the *distinction*⁷ between Church and State. But there are other areas in those fields wherein the Church must speak: those of morality or justice:

⁵ I will ignore here the well-known distinction between "civilization" and "culture", as I believe that genuine civilization, i.e. making men *civil* or apt to live together in the *civitas* or city, can only stem from culture, i.e. the genuine *cultivation* of the spirit by a devotion to what is one, true, good, and beautiful, the values which are found in their fulness only in God, the Supreme Being.

⁶ Capitalism, as a strictly economic system of free production, enterprise and exchange, on the basis of private ownership, is morally neutral; but it has been plagued and victimized by the materialism of economic liberalism, which must be therefore replaced by the ethic of the primacy of the common good or social justice, ground of all human rights, and the relativity of private ownership: see my book *The Roots of Society* (Sinag-tala, Manila, 1976).

⁷ Not "separation": man cannot be split, as he has a unified being. He is at once a citizen of both *cities*, the one this side of death and the one beyond it.

"Between evangelization and human promotion there are very strong links: anthropological, theological, and of charity...

"The Church's action in such fields as human promotion, development, justice, rights of the person and so forth, wants to be always at the service of man and of man such as she regards him in the *christian vision* of the anthropology adopted by her. She has no need, therefore, to appeal to systems and ideologies in order to love, defend and cooperate in man's *liberations* in the very core of the message of which she is trustee and herald, she finds inspiration to act on behalf of brotherhood, of justice, of peace, against all dominations, slaveries, discriminations acts of violence, attempts against religious freedom, aggressions against man, and all attacks to life..."

The Social Dimension of Private Property

The economic aspect of man (man is not an angel) is also part of man, and as such affected by the moral law and the demands of justice (metaphysical view of man). The Pope here refers to the luminous teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on private property, inspired by the primacy of the common good, explained at length by the Popes, from Leo XIII to Paul VI⁸.

The Pope draws attention to the

"... urgent character of the teaching of the Church, according to which there is a *social mortgage*⁹ on all private property. With regard to this teaching the Church has a mission to fulfill: she must preach, educate persons and collectivities, form public opinion, orient the leaders of nations. She will thus be working on behalf of society, within which this *christian and evangelical principle* will eventually yield fruit with a more just and equitable distribution of goods, not only inside of every nation, but also in the international world at large, preventing the stronger countries from using their power to the detriment of the weaker ones.

"Those who are responsible for the public life of states and nations will have to understand that both internal and international peace will be ensured only if a social and economic system based on justice is in force."

⁸ See my books: *The Roots of Society*, Chapter VII, and *Social Morals* (CRC, Manila, 1975), Chapter IX.

⁹ Italics in the original: the Pope wants to stress that private property *must* be used taking into account the *social* needs. This is social justice or the primacy of the common good.

The Christian Meaning of Liberation

And now the Pope comes to the core of his message:

"Pastoral commitments must be encouraged in this field with a *right christian conception of liberation.*"

It should be recalled that the marxian "liberation" from all "alienations" must begin with the abolition of private property as the cause of man's economic alienation, which is his most basic since his whole being, according to dialectical and historical materialism, is reduced to self-creative matter. When this alienation has been removed, the other ones, built on it, will also crumble, namely the social (abolition of social classes), the political, the ideological, the cultural, and finally the ultimate alienation, the most desperate and degrading, the religious alienation ("religion is the opium of the people"): a new, liberated "superstructure" of cultural values, entirely social and earthly (the earthly paradise), will then rise on the new economic "infrastructure" without private property. And the process that will lead to this "liberation" is the *class-struggle*, activated by hatred.¹⁰ This is not merely the opposite of Christianity, but its very *contradiction*, i.e. a statement which radically negates, invalidates or annihilates its opposite, so that both are absolutely incompatible.

Here is the Pope's lucid explanation of the christian meaning of liberation:

"The Church feels the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, the duty to help consolidate this liberation (*Evangeli nuntiandi* no. 30). But she also feels the corresponding duty to proclaim this liberation in its *integral profound sense*, such as Jesus proclaimed and fulfilled it (*Evang. nunt.*, no. 31).

— *Liberation from everything that oppresses man, but which is, above all, salvation from sin and from the wicked one, within the joy of knowing God and being known by Him (Evang. nunt., no. 9).*

— Liberation made up of reconciliation and forgiveness.

— Liberation stemming from the fact of being children of God, whom we have the power to call *Abba, Father* (Rom. 8:15), and whereby we recognize a brother in every man, capable of being transformed in his heart by the mercy of God.

¹⁰ See my book *Marxism, Socialism and Christianity*, (CRC, Manila, 1976).

- Liberation which, with the energy of charity, impels us to a communion whose summit and fulness we find in the Lord.
- Liberation as the overcoming of the various *slaveries and idols fashioned by man*¹¹, and as the growing up of the new man.
- Liberation which, within the mission proper to the Church, is not reduced to the *mere and narrow economic dimension*, or political, or social, or cultural, and does not sacrifice itself to the demands of some strategy or other, of a praxis¹², or of a short-term success (*Evang. nunt.*, no. 33)¹³

"In order to safeguard the *originality* of christian liberation, and thus preserve the *energies* of which it is capable, it is *absolutely necessary*, as Pope Paul VI was asking, to avoid *reductions and ambiguities*."

I can think of both

(i) the *secularist* or materialist types of reduction of those who, under the influence of a self-worshiping humanism, whether masonic, socialist or marxist, would completely *desacralized* the Church, stripping her of all her transcendence and vertical thrust, making priests look like laymen, churches like assembly halls, and liturgy like mere communal celebrations;

(ii) the *clericalism* of those who conceive of the priest as popular leader, instead of a self-effacing *minister* or servant of the people of God, whose mission is to renew the only Redeeming Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, to forgive sins by providing the channels of divine grace (Sacraments), and to proclaim the Gospel in all its purity, as the II Vatican Council declared¹⁴, while all leadership and activity in the secular field (social, political, economic...) belongs specifically to the layman, whose mission is to bring the spirit of the Gospel to all secular realities¹⁵.

As for "ambiguities", there is no lack of them in the language of those reckless reductions of Christianity. An ambiguity is a state-

¹¹ Contrast this with the various "alienations" fashioned by "society" according to Marxism, for which the *individual* man has no being of his own: there is no *personal* responsibility and therefore no *personal* sin.

¹² A favorite marxian term: for marxism, *thinking* is the result of *acting* — a materialist turnabout.

¹³ Notice the frequent references to the preceding *magisterium* of Paul VI.

¹⁴ Cf. particularly the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, no. 28, and the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

¹⁵ Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, Chapter IV, and the Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* (on the Lay Apostolate).

ment or term which can be understood in many senses and therefore easily leads to confusion in those who lack sufficient information and training. The widespread confusion of the people of God in our time bears witness to those ambiguities, and makes clarity and precision a crying need in the church.

The Social Doctrine

The Pope then puts forward a program for action:

"What we have recalled above constitutes a rich and complex heritage which *Evangelii nuntiandi* calls the Social Doctrine or Social Teaching of the Church (*Evang. nunt.*, no. 38). This doctrine rises in the light of the World of God and of the authentic Magisterium, out of the involvement of christians in the very heart of the changing situations of the world, and in contact with its challenges. Therefore, it carries with it not only *principles for reflection*, but also *criteria for assessment* and *guidelines for action* (cf.

Octogesima adveniens, no. 4).

"To trust responsibly in this Social Doctrine, even though some are trying to cast doubts or mistrust on it, *to study it seriously*, to try to apply it, to teach it, to be faithful to it, is, in a son of the Church, a guarantee of the authority of his commitment in the delicate and demanding social tasks, and of his efforts on behalf of the liberation or promotion of his brethren."

Specific Field of the Laity

And finally, the Pontiff emphasizes once again that the *implementation* in society of the Social Doctrine of the Church is the specific task of the layman, who therefore needs to be well instructed in this respect, so as to act with *personal* responsibility, with personal conviction, without involving the Church authorities in what is specifically secular:

"Allow me, therefore, to recommend to your particular pastoral attention the urgency of making your faithful aware of this social Doctrine of the Church.

"Particular care must be given to the formation of a *social consciousness* at all levels and in all sectors. As injustices become rampant, and the gap between rich and poor painfully widens, the

Social Doctrine, in a creative fashion and open to the wide fields of the Church's presence, must be a precious instrument of formation and action. This is particularly valid with regard to the laity: Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 43).

"Any type of supplanting must be avoided, and we have to seriously study to what extent some forms of substitution are justifiable¹⁶. Are not the laymen called, by virtue of their vocation in the Church, to make their contribution in the political and economic fields, and to be effectively present in the defense and promotion of human rights?"

We can venture to say without fear that this papal address is an epoch-making document.

¹⁶ Priests or religious should not "supplant" or "substitute" for lay people unless it is necessary.

"EVERY CHILD IS OUR OWN!"

By

KURT WALDHEIM

UN Secretary-General

The United Nations has proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child.

This proclamation stems from a belief which is common to us all. Rich or poor, we regard our children as our most precious resource. To our children belongs our future.

The world into which our children will grow should be one in which national resources are used justly and wisely and the life of nations is marked by co-operation and not by conflict. The fear of war should be overcome by the limitless hopes of peace. We cannot leave our children a legacy of want and strife.

This is the very essence of the Charter of the United Nations. We have to ensure that the generations which will succeed us are enabled to realize the human potentiality for construction and progress. They will be so enabled only if we now recognize the rights and meet the special needs of our children for the warmth of affection, for adequate nourishment, for health services and for educational preparation for their future. These needs remain unfulfilled in one way or another through large segments of human society.

The International Year of the Child is meant to encourage all countries to review their programmes for promoting the physical and mental well-being of their children. These programmes are to be pursued at community, national and international levels. They should be an integral part of plans for social and economic development.

This year will give us a chance to demonstrate that the peoples of the world—governments, institutions and individuals alike—can work together effectively towards a purpose which is central to human destiny. Humanity owes to the child the best it has to give. I appeal to all to participate in the activities directed towards creating a secure and happy future for our children."

IYC was first proposed in 1974 a representative of the non-governmental organizations at a UNICEF executive board meeting "to spur leaders and citizens in each country to take permanent, practical measures that will benefit children everywhere". On 21 December 1976, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 1979 the International Year of the Child since "in spite of all efforts, far too many children, especially in developing countries, are undernourished, without access to adequate health services, missing the basic educational preparation for their future and deprived of the elementary amenities of life". (A/RES/31/169). This resolution urges the people and governments of the world to:

RENEW their concern for children-our world's most precious resource.

REVIEW their local and national programmes for children.

REAFFIRM their determination to increase services benefiting the child on a permanent basis.

FOCUS on the special needs of the child, especially in education and health care.

STIMULATE national and local action programmes for children in all countries, especially the most seriously disadvantaged groups.

The UN General Assembly designated UNICEF as the "lead agency" to co-ordinate activities within the UN system and with governments. For this purpose, two Secretariats were established: in Geneva to cover Europe, and in New York to cover the rest of the world.

An appeal was launched to the government of each member state asking it to assume responsibility and leadership in establishing a National Commission to carry out activities within the framework of the IYC. The general objectives launched in this appeal were:

"(a) To provide a framework for advocacy on behalf of children and for enhancing the awareness of the special needs of children on the part of decision-makers and the public;

"(b) To promote recognition of the fact that programmes for children should be an integral part of economic and social develop-

ment plans, with a view to achieving, in both the long-term and the short-term, sustained activities for the benefit of children at the national and international levels."

Governments have largely followed this recommendation, and such Commissions exist in 120 countries having as wide a scope as possible with governmental leadership and participation by organizations, institutions, professionals, individuals and the mass media. Each Commission has established a Secretariat from where public information activities are co-ordinated with the IYC Secretariat.

International non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have united in an NGO/IYC Committee with a Secretariat in Geneva and New York. This Committee is reaching out to the many voluntary agencies in the participating countries.

As there will be no world conference, IYC can be regarded as a "do-it-yourself" year for each Government, with the IYC Secretariat acting as a "clearing-house", thus securing an international mechanism for action.

OUR CONSTITUTION AND DIVORCE

&

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

By

Fr. Juan Gaborni
Barugo, Leyte

Divorce does not remedy marriage ills, but aggravates and multiplies them. When a man divorces his wife and marries another, he persuades himself that he has found an angel and that his new life will be a path of roses. But before long, he find the torns as before. Divorce leads to divorce. Many people live more miserably with their second mate than with their first, and yet more miserably with the third, said an expert adviser of husband and wife. Certainly, this kind of people are not good Christians, and so, in contracting marriage, they are only after dubious pleasure and cloying delights or merely for sex and materialistic motives which largely bring with them ilussionment and regrets. They are not, above all, after their eternal salvation ("For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?), nor rather after joy and happiness or love. And pleasure compared to joy and happiness is glittering tin compared to silver and white gold. And "sex separated from love is not human but animal." And marriage, in the design of the Creator, was intended as the proper means of perpetuating the human race.

Undoubtedly, divorce will undermine and weaken the Filipino family, for as Bishop Cornelio M. Ferrer (retired) says: "Divorce is the number one American social cancer". On the other hand, our Constitution under Article II, Section 4 specifically and with emphatic determination states: "The State shall strengthen the the family as a basic social institution". And Bishop Ferrer, moreover, says: "For those who are advocating for the introduction of divorce in the Phillippines, I wish to suggest that they read the story of creation as recorded in the book of Genesis. The story tells about the beautiful Garden of Eden and the creation of a woman out of Adam's ribs. As Adam looked at her he said lovingly, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh". Then the

story concluded: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). That is the divine and moral injunction on marriage. And Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, together with the institution of the Sacrament of marriage, says: "What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Indeed, it is doubtful if there is anything more vital to human society than marriage. For as much as the family is the basis of society, marriage is the basis of the family. So, if the marriage bond be loose, both family and society will suffer. But, if the marriage bond be firm and strong, both family and society will be secured and strong.

Yes, history tells us that a sound family life is essential to the security and well-being of a nation, for it is an undeniable fact that the family as stated in our Constitution, is a basic social institution" or a basic unit of society — the very foundation of the structure of the State, and as such it must by all means be built on the rock foundation of marital fidelity and marriage indissolubility, in accordance with the divine and moral injunction, and not on human license or temporal lusts and earthly desires, so that the State may be strong and stable, and may thus be able to stand against the whips and scorns of time.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF PARENTS

By

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

Though this title may sound somewhat unusual, it is but a special phase of the **general priesthood of the faithful**, which is common Catholic belief, deeply grounded in the Scriptures, which are loud in their testimony that God's People are a priestly people. Not only did Christ give the apostles and their successors special priestly powers not granted to the faithful in general, such as the power to offer the same sacrifice as he did at the last supper when he said to them: "Do this as a remembrance of me" (Lk. 22: 19), and the power to forgive sins when he said to them: "If you forgive men's sins they are forgiven them" (Jn. 20:22); but beyond that, Jesus wanted the faithful themselves to share not only his divine sonship but also his priestly character. St. Peter is explicit when he addresses the faithful with these words: "You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a **holy priesthood**, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). Again, further down he writes: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (v.9). St. Paul envisions the life of a Christian as a sacrificial liturgical act: "I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a **living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship**" (Rom. 12:2). And John in the book of Revelation cries out: "To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, who made us a royal nation of priests in the service of his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever" (1:5f).

The priest is mediator between God and man. His role is to bring God to man and man to God through Jesus the Savior. But if parents share the priesthood of Christ, then it is likewise their role, and especially their role. How then are parents to bring to God their family and their household and bring God to them in return? This is worthy considering from various angles.

The Ministry of the Word

Vatican II has placed great emphasis on this duty of priests: to preach the word of God, especially the Good News of Jesus Christ. Parents fulfill this role by speaking to their children about

God, reading to them the Good News, the Gospel, teaching them some of the lovely psalms which occur so often in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the new liturgy. Thus they are heralds of the word of God, and bring forth Christ in the hearts of their children, increasing the Christ-life in them as the months and years roll by. They will make known to all in the family-circle the loving Father, of whom Jesus speaks again and again in the Gospels, who created them and watches over them in his divine providence and loving care, creating all the good things of this life for their enjoyment and well-being: the Father who loved them so much that he gave his only Son up to death for their sake, and raise him from the dead to be always with us as our Savior and our Brother. They will speak to them of Jesus who became a Babe just to win their hearts, and how he grew up as an obedient child in the home of Nazareth, how he labored at the carpenter's bench as a noble youth, "progressing steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men" (Lk. 2:52); how he walked among men, bent on doing good to all around him. They will speak of the Holy Spirit who dwells deep in their hearts, and imitate Leonidas, the father of Origen, one of the early Church writers, who bent down to kiss the breast of his child each night before retiring, because it was the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. They will tell their children of Mary, their heavenly Mother who Jesus obeyed so willingly when a child, and whom Jesus gave them as he lay dying on the cross; they will speak of Joseph, humble and obedient man of prayer and labor, and of many other things that make up the Good News.

Children have all kinds of TV programs to enrapture them today, such as Batman, Spiderman, Wonderwoman and the like. But let their young and docile minds also be told of the true Wonderworker of Nazareth, who worked genuine miracles that astounded the men and women of his day, and how his message to the crowds was so dynamic that they wanted to make him king; but how they all turned against him and crucified him. Yet he rose from the dead glorious and immortal, to open the gates of heaven for us. Not only to the very young are parents to play a priestly role in being heralds of the word. Adolescent youth is in great need of the stabilizing effects of the Gospel and the magnetic personality of Jesus. There are families who add a portion of the Gospels to their daily family rosary. Each member takes at turn at reciting the gospel of the day or some other passage from the bible that is meaningful. A bit of sharing follows, either an explanation read from a book, or the simple insights that children can give, which are often quite surprising. Even teen-agers will not find it boring, if they are given a chance to

share their insights, or other ways of manifesting creativity. In this way, the word of God as gradually molding the family into a truly Christian family, built up on the inspired word of God, which is powerful as a sharp sword (Hebr. 4:12).

Parents could also encourage all the members of the household on Saturday evenings, to pay close attention to the readings and the homily in the Church on Sundays, and then share their views and insights Sunday evenings at the prayer session. You may object that the children run at once after supper to the TV. That is the bane of total lack of control concerning TV. There can be ample time for TV, but a well-regulated family will also find time for prayer and for the Lord. We are servants of Christ, not slaves of TV.

The Power of Example

The prophets Hosea (ch. 4) and Malachi (ch. 1) severely rebuke those priests who only give lip service to the Lord but their lives are far from edifying. So too the priesthood of parents will manifest itself by **deeply Christian lives**. It is not enough to tell the children about God and about Jesus the Savior and his savings message. **They must live that message in their personal lives and show by their example how it affects their dealings with others.** Words move but example draws. More than any amount of rules and regulations on behavior, the example of parents who understand the meaning of their baptismal commitment and try to carry it out, will go a long way to give the members of the household inspiration and encouragement. The best example they can give is a deep love for God and their holy religion. This touches the very marrow of their lives for it rests on a genuine spirit of faith. When the parents are observed by the children to be truly devoted to the Lord, they are much more ready to be obedient and docile than if many rules had been imposed on them.

In Israel of old, an incentive was given to the whole household to love God when each morning the family-father was required to recite to them the so-called "shema": "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God. You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4f). With this daily reminder, the People of God would be intent on loving Yahweh, God of Israel, above all else. In the new People of God, parents who have a personal love for Jesus the Lord, and foster a living relation with him, are bound to influence the children in many ways. **The children sense this religious spirit and want to imitate it.** All our rules and

regulations cannot compensate for a lack of deep faith and ardent love of God in our midst. However, despite all good will, there will always be one or the other child that poses a problem at some time or another, and that needs special attention.

How shall parents manifest their deep faith and ardent love of God?

1. **By the prayer-life of the parents themselves:** The usual family rosary and table prayers are excellent customs but something more is needed, and that is occasional quiet personal prayer on the part of father or mother. How can we convince our children that God is important if we do not give him any of our time? How can we pretend to love him, if we hardly ever spend a few moments with him alone? What child is not impressed on seeing father or mother kneel from time to time in silent prayer at the bedside or at the house-shrine, be it of the Sacred Heart or of the Virgin Mother, communing quietly with God? Father and mother do this not merely to give good example but because they actually feel the need of personal prayer. Jesus alone is their Savior, their **personal Savior**, their Helper in every need, their Brother and Friend in the many troubles that enter into every family's life. Jesus is God, with unlimited power. Moreover, he not only deserves our petitions for help, but also our praise and gratitude for all the favors and benefits bestowed on the various members of the family.

Today, many families have joined one or the other group of charismatic prayer-sessions. It teaches young and old to praise God for his goodness, to thank him again and again for his countless favors. In such prayer, the hearts of parents are enlarged and filled with joy. They learn to appreciate more deeply the great gifts of faith, hope and love, and the many talents and opportunities granted to the children. They implore the help of the Holy Spirit to assist them in their duties of bringing their family to God. Many a boy or girl is not aware that it is on account of a father's or mother's frequent prayer that their child was able to overcome certain hurdles in life, the temptations by which the youth today are bombarded on all sides. This is well brought out in a recent book, "From Playboy to Priesthood", how it was a mother's persevering prayer lasting through many years that finally brought her son to the goal of the priesthood for which he had opted in younger years, but had eventually put out of his head, and gave himself up to sheer worldly pursuits. In the end, the mother's prayer were heard. Many a parent could tell a similar story of their boy or girl.

Despite the great value of charismatic prayer-meetings, they must not replace or even be preferred to the eucharistic celebration

of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. **The Eucharist is the center of Christian life.** Here the parents must lead the way. It is not at all edifying for the children if the parents make it a habit to come late for Holy Mass every Sunday, although this could take place when some unforeseen difficulty arises. If the parents have that bad habit, the rest of the family will grow up doing the same thing. Coming late for the Eucharistic Celebration makes a person miss the prayers of the preparatory part, the readings and responses, the homily and other prayers, all of which are precisely chosen to prepare the mind and heart for the personal encounter with the incarnate Son of God in the liturgy of the Eucharist, when the faithful offer Christ to the Father as their supreme gift, and receive him in loving Communion. It is also a great help for a growing family if father and mother are frequent communicants. In some parishes the family goes to the altar together. The Eucharist is the sign of unity and love, and the very power that makes us one in the Lord and one with one another.

2. By the virtues manifested by the parents: The commitment of parents to the following of Christ as enjoined on them in baptism will also be manifested in the virtues that blossom in their midst. St. Paul best describes the Christian community in this fashion:

Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus; give thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3: 12-17)

This is the Christian life which parents, manifesting the priesthood of Christ, ought to cultivate. It is a replica of the virtuous life Jesus lived while on earth. These are his virtues: mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and patience; longsuffering, forgiveness and love; peace and gratitude, and love for the word of God in the scriptures.

On the contrary, frequent quarrelling harms the sensitiveness of the children; infidelity throws their minds and hearts into confusion; giving in to them at all times and pampering them reaps a sorrowful harvest. There is an excellent passage on the training of

children in the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) ch. 30: "He who loves his son chastises him often, that he may be his joy when he grows up. He who disciplines his son will benefit from him and boast of him among his intimates. He who spoils his son will have wounds to bandage . . . A colt untamed turns out stubborn; a son left to himself grows up unruly. Pamper your child and he will be a terror for you, indulge him and he will bring you grief. Give him not his own way in his youth, and close not your eyes to his follies. Bend him to the yoke when he is young, lest he become stubborn, disobey you and leave you disconsolate".

Sacrifice and Sacrament

A most important aspect of Christ's priesthood and that of parents is in the realm of self-oblation. Jesus gave himself totally in service of his fellowmen even unto the immolation of himself in death on the cross. But the night before he died, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his Paschal Mystery, and enjoined on his apostles to continue to offer him in sacrifice. From that time till now the ordained priest offers Jesus to the Father in the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the chief source of blessing and divine favor for all Christians and for the entire universe. But the priest also reaches out to the Christian community through the dispensing of the sacraments, bringing Christ to each member of his Body in a number of various encounters. Finally, through the blessing of sacramentals and symbols, Christian life is deepened. This priestly aspect of sacrifice and sacrament is also of great importance for the priesthood of parents.

1. **Sacrifice:** This is what St. Paul meant when he said: "I beg of you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:2). Our lives are a continual oblation offered with Christ's life of sacrifice to the Father. Unless we shoulder our cross and follow after him, we cannot be his disciples, as he stated so clearly in the Gospel (Lk. 14:27). Far from shirking the cross, let parents enter resolutely into the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which is both a **life of service to one another** and to their children, and a **life of self-immolation** for one another. Their trials and sufferings will then have salvific value, they will help redeem the world; they fill up, as Paul says, what is lacking to the sufferings of the whole Christ for his Body, the Church, (Col. 1:24), but especially for the members of their household.

There are various trials which God allows parents to undergo in the raising of a family and the upbringing of their children.

There are problems of adjustment to be made, health problems, financial problems, problems of discipline and mutual understanding, and many other worries that every father and mother are well aware of. Junior has become a sick child and needs much hospital attention, and costly medicine. Mother's health is not the best either. Bills keep mounting while father's job remains the same with no increase of salary. Teachers complain about this or that child, teen-agers seem to lose contact with parents and even with the rest of the family; housing quarters become inadequate, taxes cut down on the family budget, and similar things.

One could easily forget that all this is **part of the priesthood of parents**. If God willed that the world only be redeemed by the sufferings and death of his Son, then we can be sure that he has grand plan in whatever trials he allows to come our way. Suffering and trial mature the family, make it more detached from the present life so that they are no bogged down by the passing necessities of this life, but that they make use of them to carry out the will of the Father here below, and enjoy eternal happiness in the new world of Christ to come. An eminent example how suffering greatly ennobled a family is the case of a certain Catholic family with a large number of children, happy, healthy and very religious in their service of the Lord. One day a truck ran over the little twelve-year-old girl, and the mother watched in agonizing distress as her little one was taken by the ambulance to the hospital. Through the united efforts of many doctors and nurses, through a longer period of time, the little one survived. During her prolonged period of recuperation, what love and care was called forth from every member of the family and from many doctors and nurses besides. Love blossomed in so many unexpected instances. The amount of good which this trial brought out into the open was immense. Only the goodness of God foresaw what would happen when calamity struck that family.

Such trials do not come to every family, but every family has its cross to bear, and every member can enter into the life of service for each other, that Jesus manifested so perfectly in his life-long service of his fellow men. That calls for continued sacrifice of one's own whims and private wishes, to be available at all times for the needs of others. Mother and father are daily applying this angle of Christ's Paschal Mystery if they willingly care for each other and for their children in loving service of their bodily and spiritual needs. Still more do parents enter into the suffering and immolation phase of Christ's Paschal Mystery by their continued gift of themselves to each other, which often entails much sacrifice. Love is not love until it gives itself completely to the other. Self-denial, self-immolation is the hallmark of the priest-

hood of parents. As St. Paul tells us: "While we live we are constantly being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh. Death is at work in us, but life in you" (1 Cor. 4:11). The sacrifices and self-denials made by parents for the sake of their children mean deeper Christian life, spiritual life for them. Let parents frequently unite themselves in spirit with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, being offered at every moment of the day in the Eucharist, and their lives and actions take on great value before God. Theirs is then truly a priestly life.

2. **Sacrament:** Not only is it the Eucharistic sacrifice that brings God to man and man to God, but also the sacraments in general, which Jesus instituted. Each one is an encountered with Christ. Though it is chiefly the ordained priest who dispenses the sacraments, yet, the sacrament of marriage is dispensed not by the priest but by the parents themselves. Man and wife are instruments of God's graces and favors in the sacrament of marriage. They themselves are the ministers of this sacrament. Here they are truly and eminently priestly in their actions. At times it can also occur that mother or father act as extraordinary minister of baptism, when a child would die if no priest were available, or no one else who usually administers baptism in such cases, such as a nurse. Everyone ought to know how to baptize in emergency. Pour the water (any water, holy water if you have it) on the brow, that is the forehead (not merely the hair) of the babe, and while pouring the water say the proper form of baptism: I baptize you (N.) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What is required is that one have the intention to baptize as the Church wishes the child to be baptized. There are other priestly roles which laymen share today, such as preaching the word of God on given occasions, distributing holy Communion to others, bringing Communion to the sick, etc.,

But besides being ministers of the sacraments in the strict sense, **the very lives of parents can be geared to be sacramental.** A sacrament is a visible sign which conveys invisible interior grace, or in more modern parlance, it is the very action of Christ reaching out to heal, to bless, to confer love and favor. Since every Catholic parent in the friendship of God (the state of sanctifying grace) is a Temple of the Indwelling Spirit, all actions done in union with that divine Spirit and prompted by him can be vehicles of Grace. Christ living in his members is reaching out to bring joy, love and divine favors to others. The ordinary daily deeds and words of parents become messengers of God's love and channels of his benefits. Our Blessed Mother Mary greeted Elizabeth with

an embrace and a word of peace, as was customary in those days. But the Holy Spirit made use of those words and actions of Mary by pouring out his favors both on Elizabeth and on little John in her bosom (Lk. 1:40-42). So too, parents by their words and deeds can bring about wonderful changes in the hearts of their children, because their words and actions become sacramental in character, and Jesus continues his salvific action through them. It is the Spirit of Jesus at work again, using ordinary words and actions as a vehicle of his favors. The daily cooking, washing, mending, cleaning done by mother can have a sacramental dimension, if done out of love of God and in union with the indwelling Holy Spirit, and these actions not only add to their children's physical well-being but win for them spiritual growth as well. The daily labor performed by the father of the household, be it in the office, the factory, the farm or in any other employment, but especially his attentiveness to his growing family while with them in the evening or on Sundays, are not merely acts on the natural level, but also sacramental in character which the Spirit of Jesus utilizes to bring the deeper Christ-life to them. Thus is so beneficial to frequently ask the Lord Jesus to live in us, in the words of St. Paul (Gal. 2:20), or the Holy Spirit to make use of our whole being to carry out his work of love, as he did when Mary greeted and embraced Elizabeth.

3. Symbols. Still another way in which parents can bring God to their children and their children to God is by the proper use of symbols. The crucifix belongs in every Catholic home, for it is the sign of God's immense love for us, and constant reminder that Jesus saved us by his death. If we are ashamed to put the crucifix in a place where everyone can see it, let us be mindful of what Jesus said: "If a man is ashamed of me and my doctrine, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in glory" (Lk. 9:26). Many Catholic families also have an altar or shrine in a conspicuous place in the home, dedicated either to the Sacred Heart or to the Virgin Mother. The consecration of the family to the Sacred Heart and its annual renewal are impressive events and leave a lasting imprint on the minds of the young. Likewise the blessing of a new house or shop, if carried out in a meaningful manner, gives evidence of true Catholic faith. Another article that ought to be at hand is a receptacle for holy water. This is long-standing Catholic usage, for the Church has used blessed water from earliest times to disperse the powers of darkness and to bless her children with the sign of the cross.

Besides these, there are symbols for various seasons of the year which can be used to much advantage in the home, to bring the

knowledge and love of our holy religion to various members of the household. The **advent wreath** with its four candles, representing the four weeks of advent-waiting, is coming more and more into use. It prepares the family for the coming Birthday of Jesus. Each Saturday evening one candle is lit till all four burn together, increasing each week the expectancy of all for the rebirth of Jesus in the heart. The **belén** or **Christmas-crib** has found its way into most homes, and also into many public places today. It tells us of the immense love of God who became a Babe out of love for his brothers and sisters on planet earth, and wanted to be little and weak as a child so everyone could come near to give him a return of love. The **candle** on Candlemass day, February 2nd, is a remarkable symbol of Jesus, for candles are made by virginal bees that do not mate, and so it represents the virginal Christ, lit up from above by the love of the Holy Spirit, and burning himself out for man, giving light and warmth, the warmth of love in all directions. A blessed candle ought to be in every household to greet the priest in case he brings holy communion to a sick person.

Ashes on our forehead on Ash Wednesday remind us that it is time to think seriously about the goal and end of this short life, and that it is but a passage to real life. While placing the ashes on the forehead the priest says: "Remember man that you are dust and into dust you shall return", or the alternative: "Repent, and believe the Good News". A simple **cross** displayed in Passion-tide, or placed on church-tops and over the graves symbolizes Christ's victorious conquering of death. It is the great Christian sign. Constantine placed it on his banner with the words: In this sign you shall conquer. Parents often trace the cross on the foreheads of their children so that they win the victory over sin and Satan. The mother of **Kenneth Roberts**, who is the hero in the book, "From Plaboy to Priesthood", always traced the sign of the cross on her son's forehead as often as he left home for one of his trips around the world, even when he was a grown man. It is the sign of the cross which the priest uses to bless everyone and everything offered to him to bless. The **palm** on Palm-Sunday is a symbol of joy and victory, for it reminds us of the triumphant entry of Jesus as king of his own People, and of the triumphant song of the martyrs in the book of Revelation (7:9). The **Easter Lamb** in the form of a cake or as an image on a banner is to remind us that it was the Lamb of God who took away our sins by dying for us, and that he rose glorious and triumphant, as given in the book of Revelation (ch. 5). The **dove** is the standing symbol of the Holy Spirit, hovering over Jesus in the baptism-scene (Mt. 3:16), so

that we who are born of water and the Holy Spirit may be filled with his Spirit of love and gentleness, and impelled to lead a life of service for others as Jesus did.

There are many symbols of the Eucharist, such as the wheat and the grapes, the host and the chalice, the pelican that feeds her young with her own blood, the best known symbols for Mary are the letter M entwined with the letter A, the rosary, the scapular and the miraculous medal. They symbolize our love of her which expresses itself in confident prayer, and her care and protection of us. Symbols are potent factors in molding the minds of the young as well as adolescent youth. This was powerfully illustrated by the story of the mother whose three sons, to her great disappointment, all took up the life of a sea-faring sailor. She was unable to explain why, since no one of the family had been a sailor before. But the riddle was solved when it was discovered that hanging on the diningroom wall was a painting of a large sailing vessel, cutting smartly through the waves, its sails at full billow, the captain standing in full uniform at the quarter-deck, his spy-glass in his hand, scanning the horizon. Morning, noon and night, with every meal, the boys had taken into their inner consciousness the sense of high adventure portrayed in that picture. Without a word being spoken, it had planted in them a strong desire for the sea. Thus too the surroundings of the home make a tremendous impact on the growing children, and the age-old custom of having pictures of our Lord, our Lady and the saints in the home is worth while continuing. Catholic symbols and pictures make us aware of spiritual realities.

The Shepherd

Christ placed over his flock not merely leaders but shepherds. There is a difference. A leader may lead his people well, but he may not know them too well individually. He is intent on the overall goal, but may not be too taken up with the destiny of the individual. A shepherd, on the contrary, knows each and everyone of his flock, tends them personally, cares for them with great affection and diligence, and will defend each and every sheep from the enemy even with his life, if necessary. Parents also share this aspect of Christ's priesthood. They take the place of Christ, the Good Shepherd, nourishing Christ's little ones. Three characteristics stand out:

1. **Experienced guidance:** A shepherd guides his flock to pasture that he knows from experience is good for them and is not full of obnoxious weeds. So the true Christian parent does not neglect

to guide the child from his or her own wise experience, or that of others who are well-versed in the bringing up of children. It is important that there be a certain amount of surveillance concerning TV programs, movies, reading matter and companions, although this will be wisely adjusted to the age and competence of the adolescent and teen-age years. Parents will not be averse to taking counsel with others, for today's cultural backgrounds especially for teenagers may differ considerably from those of older parents. Neither permissiveness or over-strictness will prove the best policy. For that matter they may at times need the help of guidance-counsellors in a given parish or school. But guidance will above all be sought in prayer from the Lord himself, and especially at the Eucharistic Banquet. There they will plead for the gift of wisdom from the Holy Spirit. When Solomon became king of Israel, he was a young and inexperienced ruler. He besought the Lord in prayer, and when the Lord asked him what was his request, he replied: "Give me wisdom, O Lord, so that I can guide this People of yours with understanding." The Lord was so pleased with this request that he assured him: "Because you have asked for wisdom and not for wealth nor power nor the domination of your enemies, I have give you wisdom the likes of which have not been known till now, and moreover, I have added wealth and power besides" (1 Kgs. 3:9-13).

2. Personal and individual care: A true Christian parent will not show partiality, but be a true mother or father to each child. It does happen that a child becomes silent and unhappy because it is passed over and made little of, while most of the attention goes to the favorite in the family. Each child is a gift that God has entrusted to the parent's care. For each one Jesus died, and each one has a glorious destiny, depending very much on how those early years are molded with motherly care and fatherly interest. There are heroic examples of parents who lavish much care and attention on retarded children, some who are as old as thirty and have never left their bed, and need to be fed and cared for in every detail, without receiving much affection in return. God alone knows what patience and long-suffering such parents must manifest all through the years. This is indeed eminent Christian virtue. But even the ordinary care and personal interest in the various members of the family will exact no small amount of patient endurance from parents.

3. Understanding love: Sheep are so helpless. But the good shepherd understands their needs and out of love remains with them through sunshine and storm until he can bring them back home each evening. If one has strayed, Jesus told the parable

how the good shepherd did not rest until he found it. Thus, the most important gift that parents can make to their dear ones is understanding love. At times, growing children, especially teenagers, may not be able to be understood, but they must always be loved. They may be passing through a crisis, and only the love of their parents and their dear ones will keep them faithful to the family circle. Christ loved us even when we sinned against him, and he always takes back the wandering sheep with great understanding and tenderness. A very helpful remedy today for misunderstanding in the family is dialogue, if carried out properly and patiently. Youth wants to speak out, to give their side of the question, to also be listened to. Dialogue has often straightened out many a thorny problem in the family.

Yet, love does not mean that we do away with all correction. On the contrary, true love will imitate the Lord, who though goodness itself at times corrected his own apostles with severity. Peter was rebuked in no mean terms (Mt. 16:23), and so were James and John (Lk. 9:55). Again, all the apostles were reprimanded when they tried to keep the mothers with the children away from Jesus, but the Lord became indignant at his apostles for their action (Mk. 10:14). Nevertheless to have its proper effect, all correction must be done with love, even though it is necessary to be firm. All rancor, harshness and bitterness will not obtain the desired effects. It was the thought of a father who was not a stern disciplinarian but who had a most loving and compassionate heart, that gave courage to the "prodigal son" to come back after having squandered all his inheritance! And with what love the father received him! (Lk. L5:20-23).

Thus, parents' guidance is to be always brimful of love. **For God is love.** And Christ our High Priest died out of love. So love will be the chief characteristic of the priesthood of parents in the guidance of the children given to their care by a loving Father in heaven. United with Christ, their High Priest and Savior, parents will bring them to the final goal for which they brought them into this world: the eternal enjoyment of the blessed mansions of the Father, where all the members of the family who have faithfully followed Christ will be united in an eternal embrace of God's Spirit of Love.

ARE CATHOLICS NOW ALLOWED TO JOIN MASONRY?

By

Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P.

Lately, Manila's parish priests have been furnished copies of a letter released by the Apostolic Nunciature on August 7, 1975, where-in the Head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith answers a request of the Philippine Hierarchy of June 24, 1975, regarding a previous petition made to the Holy See for the exemption from the penalties of c. 2335 in favor of all pilipino catholics "who in the judgment of their local Ordinaries are members in good faith of the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons in the Philippines." The letter authored by Card. Seper reads:

"In accordance with the circular letter dated July 18, 1974, which recalls a strict interpretation of c. 2335, the excommunication applies only to persons who are members of associations who militate against the Church. It is on the basis of this principle that the position of the different groups must be judged in each particular case."

The talk now is: "the Church has finally relaxed its ban on Masonry"; and "catholics may now accept membership in the lodge"; or "it is up to the bishops or the Bishops' Conference to pass judgment in each case".

Is it really accurate to talk that way?

Freemasonry or Speculative Masonry was organized in the British Isles and dates from 1717. Masonry owes its origin to the old Catholic Guilds of Masons who had dedicated their work to the expression of their catholic faith in erecting some of the now historical buildings of Europe. Under the brunt of pressure, mainly from the Protestant Reformists, the Guilds weakened and admitted into their ranks non-working members who belonged to the intelligentsia and in no time took the reins of the organization and developed the

so-called Freemasonry or Masonry for short. (WHALEN, W. J., *Christianity and American Freemasonry*, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee 1959, p. 14)

The Case of the Church and Masonry.

Since its very establishment Masonry has ever been a topic of world-wide controversy. Indeed anti-masonry is as old as Masonry itself. The Catholic Church was no exception to this universal trend against organized Masonry. Its official disapproval of Masonry dates to 1738 when Clement XII condemned the association on the grounds of its naturalism, religious indifference, its secrets oaths and rituals, and its threats animosity against the Church and State. Through the following centuries a number of papal bulls and encyclicals were issued on the subject upholding the original position of the Church against Masonry, till it was finally incorporated into the official Code of Canon Law of 1918.

Church law forbids catholics, under pain of excommunication, to join Masonry or any similar organizations which plot against the Church and or the State, (CIC, c. 2335). Thus catholics who officially and deliberately join the ranks of Masonry are automatically excluded from most of the benefits of the Church such as the licit reception of the sacraments, the participation in public acts of worship, ecclesiastical burial, etc. Only absolution from excommunication from a competent ecclesiastical authority can lift the ban and bring back to the fold of the Church the run-away catholic.

The Church Takes a New Look at Masonry.

For some time now, the Church has been reassessing its stand on Masonry. As a matter of fact, as early as the year nineteen seventy Rome had sent out to bishops the world over a survey-questionnaire on the advisability and timeliness of lifting the ban and the canonical penalties against Masonry. The world-wide consultation, however, failed to yield sufficient positive results to warrant the change of existing laws. The reaction of bishops throughout the world varied tremendously in accordance with local conditions and different attitudes of masonic groups toward the Church. The results of such consultations are reflected in an official communication released to all the bishops of the world by the Head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, wherein the traditional stand of the Church on the matter is restated. The salient features of the letter are the following: 1. the excommunication referred to in c. 2335

applies only to catholics who enrol in masonic sects which really plot against the Church and legitimately constituted State; 2. the norm set in said canon 2335, being a penal law, must be subject to strict interpretation. Hence no catholic should be considered as excommunicated unless it is beyond doubt that he accepted membership in a lodge which militates against the Church; 3. the position of members of the different lodges must be determined in each particular case; 4. clerics, religious and members of secular institutes are, in every case, forbidden to join the ranks of a masonic group.

Massonic Associations Hostile to the Church.

The ruling laid down by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith raises, first of all, the question of how can a lay catholic tell a lodge which is really hostile to the Church from one that is not. The attitude of masonic sects toward the Church vary from country to country and from lodge to lodge, hence it is not possible to set a uniform standard or rule for all. World-wide Masonry is not controlled from or by a central authority. Its unit of organization is the lodge and various lodges grouped together form the Grand Lodge. This aggrupation is made usually — though not necessarily — on a national or territorial basis. Moreover, though Grand Lodges maintain fraternal relations among themselves, this is done on purely voluntary basis as they are independent parts of one Masonic Order. Thus the catholic who wishes to identify the lodges or Grand Lodges which are not anti-catholic must study each in particular by examining, among other things the following: who are the members and leaders of the group and their religious convictions and customs; its objectives and ideals as set in the constitutions or statutes; the activities the group is actually engaged in; its attitude toward the Church; oaths and initiation rituals; the opinion of ecclesiastical authorities and other knowledgeable persons regarding the association, etc.

Traditionally some masonic lodges and Grand Lodges have the well-deserved reputation of being inimical to the Church in such countries as France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Latin America, etc. Other lodges such as those in USA, Canada, England etc. have taken a rather neutral stand on ecclesiastical issues and in general not all can be branded anti-catholic. Today things have changed and masonic lodges have usually adopted a more benevolent attitude toward the Church. It is said that the rank and file masons — “knife and fork” — are now free from any anti-catholic bias, though a rather considerable amount of it can be found among some of their leaders and higher degrees.

The case of Filipino Masonry has been the object of a serious study by the Philippine Hierarchy for the past few years the result of which has been summarized in a letter of Bishop Gaviola sent to the Apostolic Nuncio on June 24, 1975, which states: "The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the Philippines no longer could be counted among those associations which truly plot against the Church", (*Boletín Ecclesiástico*, 1974, p. 239).

Though we are not in a position to question or confirm the above statement, still we believe that caution should be exercised in every case as to avoid undue generalizations both in the restrictive and permissive senses.

The Decision to Accept Membership into Masonry.

A final point worth considering at the moment concerns the person or authority to whom it should devolve to pass judgment on the various kinds of masonry and their varying attitudes toward the Church. Should the final decision be left to the lay catholic who is toying with the idea of accepting membership in the masons, or would it be rather a case for judgment by his parish priest or bishop?

As a point of reference we present here the ruling set by the Bishops of England and Wales for their constituents, to wit: "if he — the catholic — sincerely believes that membership in the masons does not conflict with his loyalty to his own Church, then he should approach his bishop through his parish priest to discuss the implementation of membership for himself. Local conditions had to be kept in mind." (*The Tablet*, Nov., 23, 1974)

In France the Bishops' Conference is to determine whether a catholic can join the *regular* Freemasonry, namely, that which admits of belief in God and does not militate against the Church, (*Année Canonique*, 1977, p. 241).

The Philippine Hierarchy went a step forward when it petitioned Rome for an exception from all ecclesiastical penalties in favor of catholics joining Masonry in the Philippines. Rome, however, answered in a letter couched in general terms without any categorical concession.

Has the Church Relaxed its Stand on Masonry?

The latest look of the Church at Masonry has failed to bring about any substantial changes in ecclesiastical legislation. But one can surely sense a lessening of opposition to catholic participation

in Freemasonry due to the change of attitude of the lodges toward the Church and its spiritual endeavors. Moreover, although it is quite possible for a lay catholic to accept membership in the masons without incurring in excommunication, the Church continues to discourage catholic participation in all sorts of clandestine associations, even if their objectives are not openly inimical to the catholic faith and the interests of the legitimate State. Undoubtedly the prevailing climate is most favorable for an attempt at dialogue and understanding between the Church and Masonry. But we still consider quite premature and inaccurate to say that "catholics are now permitted to join the masons."

In any event and still a time there is a new formulation of ecclesiastical law on the matter, the following position adopted by the bishops of England and Wales seems to be most appropriate and commendable:

"A catholic should regard himself first and foremost a member of his Church and should find his inspiration for living within the fellowship of that christian community. But if he sincerely believes that membership in the masons does not conflict with this deeper loyalty to his own Church, then he should approach his bishop through his parish priest to discuss the implications of membership for himself. Local conditions have to be kept in mind."

"A catholic who has, in the past, left his Church in order to become a mason, is urged to seek reconciliation." (*The Tablet*, Nov. 23, 1974)

HOMILETICS

BIBLICAL NOTE AND OUTLINES FOR HOMILIES

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 1, 1979)

First Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-25 (Greek: 2: 23-24). Death and life are sharply contrasted. Death is not God's doing. He is the living God who gives life to all his creatures and it is his will that they continue in its possession. His marvellous creation was never intended to be destructive to man but beneficial. Death's realm is the underworld. Death itself is the work of Satan who brought man to turn against his God at the outset, so that it became the punishment of man's sinfulness. Those who go over to Satan's side will taste death forever. From the outset, God intended man for immortality, a reflection of his own image (or, according to other manuscripts, his own eternity). But this immortal life must be won by a good life (one of justice). Evidently, the author understand death in a wider sense than physical death only for it includes eternal frustration, loss of Life itself that is God, (the "second death" of Rev. 21:8).

Second Reading: Second Corinthians 8: 7-9, 13-15. A lesson in generous almsgiving. The Corinthian community is rich in charismatic gifts and in sharing Paul's love, so let it not forget to be generous in material help for the mother-community in Judea. Paul's strongest motivation for generous giving is the infinite Son's own stupendous example of emptying himself (Phil. 2:7), and living the common life of the poor in order to enrich all with heavenly gifts. However, no community is expected to deprive itself of necessities in order to provide easy living for another community. God's loving and impartial care was manifested toward everyone in the desert-sojourn of God's People, where all were expected to share the manna equally, though some could gather more than others (Ex. 16:17). When

the Corinthian community in turn will be in need, similar help from their Judean fellow-Christians can be expected, (unless Paul is referring to the spiritual abundance flowing from the Mother-Church to all).

Gospel Reading: Mark 5: 21-43 (or shorter: 5: 21-24. 35b-43). In these two miraculous cures, Mark betrays consummate skill in vivid description, so that the scenes fairly come alive. The chief lesson intended is the role of faith in Jesus. To offset any thought of magical powers at work, Jesus stresses in both cases the necessity of faith, without denying his own part in the matter. In the first level of interpretation it is confident trust in the Prophet from Nazareth that is meant, and both cures display the magnitude of his power, for in the case of the woman all human means had been exhausted, and in the case of the child further requesting seemed to be useless, since meantime she had died. Jesus inquiry who touched him may be a hint that he did not always make use of superior infused knowledge, but it could also be merely a way of bringing the cure out into the open for all to recognize. Peter and James and John are the same three who will witness the Transfiguration and be with Jesus in the Garden, three intimates of Jesus, among whom Peter holds the first place. "Sleep" is the same word used by Jesus for the deceased Lazarus in Jn. 11:11; for Jesus, real death is only that from which there is no returning. Physical death is merely the passage to life.

Writing for Christians several decades after the events, the evangelist describes them with intentional symbolic nuances which bring out his Christian message more forcefully. In the light of the Easter faith, Jesus is presented as the Divine Physician come to conquer sin and Satan as well as sickness and death, consequent on the works of Satan. Laying on of hands is often used in the New Testament for exorcisms. Both Jairus and the woman display the proper attitude of those seeking spiritual salvation from the Savior. The very words of Jairus and the woman: "get well" and/or "live" are fraught with the Christian meaning of salvation and new life in Christ. Physical contact with Christ's garments or the touch of his hand reflect the Christian conviction that God willed to grant all salvation through the Sacred Humanity of his Son. The symbolic number twelve in both instances can denote Christ's power over universal evil, for twelve is the number of completeness. The child is told to rise up to new life, and be given food (the Bread of Life).

Outline for Homily: A Healing Encounter with Christ

Introduction: On a church-door in one of the northern provinces the Knights of Columbus have hung this sign: "Praise the Lord! He heals the broken-hearted". That is only one instance how men and women all over the world are awakening more and more to the healing power of the Risen Christ in the Church. With renewed faith they are seeking his help in their distress. Many can testify to the spiritual and physical healings experienced.

1. A woman in deepest distress and an agonizing father pleading for his dying child: that is today's Gospel-scene. Both realized that all natural means were of no avail anymore: the woman had used up all her money consulting doctors, but all in vain; the father saw that his little girl was only getting worse, no matter what medicines and treatments had been applied, and that she was in a condition no physician could help anymore. Both then turned to the One and only Healer of mankind who had power to cure all and every illness of man. Both approached him with sentiments of deepest faith and utter trust. And to both Jesus granted their desire. So great was the woman's faith that she merely strove to touch his garment. So great was the father's faith that even when the shocking report was brought to him that his little girl had already died, he listened to the word of Jesus rather than to the discouraging appeal of the messengers. And the word of Jesus was: "Do not fear, only trust me". It was this childlike faith of both the woman and the child's father together with his total trust that Jesus found irresistible. Their prayers were heard.

2. This is how we are to approach Christ in our own distress to be healed or to win healing for others of any ailment, both spiritual and physical. The woman and the child's father represent all of us as well as all of mankind, wounded by sin and in great need of healing. Man is weighed down with infirmities, above all, those of his inner spirit: bad habits that years of endeavor have not broken; an evil and critical tongue that continues to be sharp and cantakerous, despite earnest endeavor to overcome the ugly defect. Man is prone to pride, to sensuality to anger and sloth, in spite of many attempts to eradicate those evils. He needs a personal encounter with Christ. He must first of all be willing to admit his helplessness in overcoming evil, despite his many attempts to do so. He must turn to Christ the Healer, and rely totally on the One sent by the Father in heaven to undo the work of Satan (1 Jn. 3:8). The work of Satan is sin, and its consequences are suffering and death. Christ alone can impart true healing. He does not raise those phy-

sically dead to life until the last day (Jn. 6:39f), but again and again he raises to the new life of the Spirit those weighed down by sin and suffering, and all who are in need of healing. "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you" (Mt. 11:28). Jesus only needs to stretch out his hand and once again the heart of man revivies, refreshed and revitalized by the Christ-life imparted to him by his Spirit.

3. Jesus told the woman: "Your faith has made you well". And to the father he said: "Don't be afraid, only believe. Trust me". Here then is the remedy offered by the Lord. Believe in him. He is our great God. Trust him. He is our personal Savior. Approach him. Encounter his Spirit. But how shall we approach him and touch him? In the celebration of the sacraments he instituted for that purpose. The sacraments are the visible actions of the invisible Christ, and in them we personally encounter Christ, the divine Healer. Do not neglect this wonderful means of experiencing true healing of heart and spirit. Let Jesus lift you up to new life. Let him raise you from spiritual death or lethargy to a renewed life in him. He himself will give you to eat of the Bread of Life in the Eucharist until you partake with him the heavenly banquet in the mansion of the Father.

Conclusion: Should others laugh at your change of life, or at your approaching the sacrament of reconciliation and healing, or of your joining a group such as the adorers or a charismatic prayer-group, and make fun of your endeavor to avoid the bad habits of yesterday, remember that they laughed even at Jesus. That changed nothing. In spite of the laughter, the agonizing father obtained peace of soul, and life for his child. The peace of soul you enjoy in the renewal of the life of the Spirit within you is worth more than all the treasures of this world and all the popularity it can offer.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 8, 1979)

First Reading: Ezekiel 2: 2-5. To carry out one's prophetic role is not easy, especially when your audience is hostile and unwilling to accept your message, as was Israel, who could not be convinced that she was in need of repentance. Ezekiel must nevertheless carry out his commission, for the Lord will not forsake his people. God's Spirit enables him to do so. He is called "son of man" not in the messianic sense of Dan. 7:15. but merely to stress the weakness and littleness of man in comparison with the greatness of God.

Second Reading: Second Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul admits to have been the recipient of great favors from God, but at the same time he has been given a heavy cross to bear, in order to keep him humble. He calls it a thorn in the flesh. The Lord did not remove it despite his frequent pleas, for man's weakness is the best condition for God's power to accomplish great things through him. So Paul gladly puts up with the cross and even boasts about it.

In general, the "thorn" is some humiliating circumstance that was an apparent hindrance to Paul in his work of evangelizing. It is not certain what he is referring to. Concupiscence is not meant, for it is common to all humans including Paul, and Paul could hardly boast about it. "Thorn" (*skolops* in Greek) as a hindrance is found in Num. 33:55, meaning the pagan nations whom Israel after entering the Promised Land did not conquer, and who remained a great hindrance to her in many ways. Hence it could refer to Paul's unconverted fellow-Jews who were constantly hindering his work, which was very humiliating for him in face of convert pagans. Or it could also be some malady that humiliated Paul and hindered his work of preaching, such as an eye infection (Gal. 4:14), or severe malaria-fever. Whatever it was, Paul could depict it as a messenger used by Satan to inflict him, like he inflicted Job with calamity and sickness (Job 1:12).

Gospel Reading: Mark 6: 1-6. In his own hometown, Jesus is received by a large expectant crowd but with very questionable dispositions. They seemed to resent this "carpenter's son" playing the role of a prophet, and even beginning his ministry elsewhere first. One can almost hear the heated remarks in the many questions used by Mark to enliven the scene. Despite his eloquence, he is not accepted by most of them, prefiguring that almost total rejection of him later on by Israel as a people. Yet Mark points out that some of his townsmen did deceive him. St. John in Jn. 1:10 reflects this rejection of his people. "Brothers" is meant in the Semitic sense of cousins, for another Mary is the mother of James and Joses in Mt. 27-55. Their lack of faith caused Jesus in turn to be amazed.

Outline for Homily: Rejected by his own.

Introduction: Recently the Shah of Persia, once a mighty ancient empire, was ousted from his country and had to flee for his life. It was not that another nation had warred against him and defeated him, but his own people rose up and rejected him. Whatever brought it about, the fact remains that the Shah who at the time of his inauguration sat in a jewel-studded throne, wearing a robe

glittering with diamonds amid much pomp and ceremony, was now rejected by his own people, scorned, hated and disowned. The glory of this world passes quickly!

1. Jesus was not only rejected by his own people in today's gospel, but by his own townsmen! It was the people of Nazareth who rose up and rejected him. Nazareth, where he had grown up since boyhood, observing all the laws and customs of his people. Nazareth, where he had plied his carpenter's trade faithfully and conscientiously every day, coming to the aid of his fellow-townsmen. Nazareth, where he had never given the slightest offence to anyone, nor any occasion for complaints. Nazareth, where his loving patience had always been an inspiration to his neighbors! Now when he came to them as a prophet sent by God with a message as to how they should live in order to be saved, this same Nazareth rejects him! Perhaps that cut more deeply into his heart than his failures at Capernaum and Corozain whom he later on chastised severely (Mt. 11:21f). No wonder John the Evangelist in his old age would write in a sad tone in the prologue of his Gospel: "To his own he came, yet his own did not accept him" (Jn. 1:11).

2. Rejection is one of the hardest things for man to bear. Everyone wishes to be accepted, especially by his own, and more so if he comes to do good to them. A doctor who knows that his patient is hopelessly lost unless he takes the medicines and treatments prescribed, feels frustrated and saddened if the patient rejects them, for he knows only too well the sad outcome of such a refusal. Jesus the divine Physician came to serve and not to be served (Mt. 20: 28). He came to give life to man and that in abundance (Jn. 10:10). He enabled man to become God's son (Jn. 1: 13). But the one requisite is to accept him for what he is: the One sent by the Father as Savior of the world. Unless mankind accepts him and his message of Good News "then there is no other name under heaven in which man can be saved" as St. Peter told the leaders of his people (Acts 4: 12). That is why Jesus is deeply disappointed and experiences such frustration when his own people whom he loved rejects him. They symbolize the nation as a whole who would also reject their Messiah-King and Savior as he stood condemned before Pilate. They also symbolize the world hostile to Christ, the world which refuses the saving power of the divine Physician to bring it true happiness and everlasting peace.

3. Why did the people of Nazareth reject Jesus? You heard the questions they were asking each other. They had to admit his wisdom and his power, yet instead of seeing all this as a sign of his

divine mission, they took offense. In their eyes he was such an ordinary man, just a carpenter. He could boast of no education like the scribes and Pharisees. His relatives were not of the upper elite class. He made no promise of what they were hankering after: material prosperity, liberation from the hated foreigner, a glorious future for Israel once more. He was not the type of Messiah they wanted. He was not to their taste. What was lacking? Faith. Faith that rises above all such natural considerations, and lives in an atmosphere of supernatural belief. They judged by the exterior, not by the light offered from on high. Even Jesus was greatly surprised at their lack of faith, his own people, his own townsmen!

Conclusion: There is an old saying: "Familiarity breeds contempt". We must look beyond the natural side of those sent us by God to bring us the Good News and the saving means to live as Gods wills. In faith, we as People of God, must accept the messengers he sends us, listen to the message given us, despite the weaknesses of human nature, and God will bring salvation to his People through his instruments whom he has chosen for his work.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 15, 1979)

First Reading: Amos 7: 12-15. Under Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, prosperity had made the country reckless. The religion of Yahweh was greatly neglected. When Amos the prophet was sent to threaten dire punishments on king and people on account of their religious crimes (2:13-15), he incurred the wrath of the unlawful priest of the royal sanctuary, who accused Amos of political meddling, and threatened to kill him if he did not flee at once. Amos stood his ground and put forth his credentials: he was not a self-appointed prophet. He did not depend on the king for a living as the false prophets of the king. He was definitely not meddling in politics if he charged the king with failure in his duties. Of himself he was a simple shepherd and caretaker of fruit trees which only the poor made use of. *But Yahweh himself had chosen him*, sending him to denounce Israel's sins. (As proof, he foretold dire chastisements for Amaziah and his entire family (v. 16).

Second Reading: Ephesians 1: 3-14. In these twelve verses, which make just one long sentence in the original Greek, Paul breaks out into a sublime magnificat, in a hymn which has rightly been called

Paul's trinitarian song of praise. In it, the immense love of God for man, expressed in the threefold action of Father, Son and Spirit, concentrates on the great mystery that is Christ. This is the object of Paul's thanksgiving, and he combines all the favors and blessings poured out on us by the Most Blessed Trinity:

1. The Father chose us to be holy in Christ in love; he fore-ordained us to be his sons by sharing Christ's Sonship; he has taken us into his favor in the person of his Beloved Son. Our response is: praise the Lord!

2. In Christ we have redemption and abundance of gifts; in Christ all things are brought together in harmony under the one headship of Christ. Not only the Jews but all nations are called to be God's special portion and obtain the inheritance. V. 10 touches on the cosmic role of Christ, and places him square in the center of the universe. Our response is again: Praise the Lord!

3. The Spirit carries Christ's work to completion. He is like a "seal" or imprint impressed on the believer, thus marking the believer henceforth as God's property. (This is a bold comparison and shows the depth of Paul's insights, yet it not to be taken in a material sense). The Spirit himself is our promised inheritance, given now in foretaste and pledge of full possession in heaven. A third time our response is: Praise the Lord!

Gospel Reading: Mark 6: 7-13. After his rejection by his own townsmen (6: 1-6) which for Mark symbolizes the eventual action of the whole people, Jesus concentrates on the Twelve who would be the pillars of the believing community (Acts 1:13). In this their first commission they are invested with the very powers of Jesus himself: driving out demons, healing, and authority to preach the Good News, all of which signalled the overthrow of Satan's reign and the establishment of the Reign of God. Repentance (*metanoia*) was the message with which Jesus began his own ministry (1:15). The Twelve were to carry themselves with the greatest simplicity and detachment, depending entirely on God's loving providence after the example of the Master. Shaking off the dust from their feet symbolized complete dissociation from those who did not receive them; and they were to be left to the judgment of God.

Outline for Homily: Favor poured out.

Introduction: A child is not grateful by birth. It is, on the contrary, quite selfish, looking only for its own needs and wants. But when it has been trained to say "Thank you" for any favor done

to it, it grows up well-mannered and pleasing to all. The Holy Father once visited an orphanage in Rome and one little tot was so pleased that she offered to the Pope what she treasured most: her little doll. What a beautiful act of a child! A grateful heart.

1. Today's second reading shows us the immense love of God pouring itself out in abundant favor toward his People. It is St. Paul's hymn of gratitude, which has a Trinitarian dimension because it touches on the work of the three divine Persons in regard to man's salvation. Man's happiness and destiny is entirely bound up with Christ, the Beloved of the Father. In him we are God's chosen children, destined to be holy and without the least blemish one day in heaven, and that for all eternity. Once this imperfect life with its failures, its sins and its ailments is over, there dawns an eternity where love permeates all things. As sons in the one Son of God we are destined to enjoy all the inheritance belonging to Christ the Lord, God's Beloved One. Ought not our hearts lift up in praise and thanksgiving for such immense favor bestowed on us? If we appreciate so much an inheritance left us in someone's last will, if we gratefully accept benefits bestowed on us, let us say, by the company for which we work, then we ought all the more appreciate and gratefully receive the spiritual benefits of the Father in heaven who has given so much in the heavenly realm toward which we inevitably tend!

2. It was Christ, God's Beloved Son, who underwent death for us to set us free from the yoke of sin and Satan. He alone wrought our redemption and paid the price of his Blood. He poured out on us abundant wisdom and gave us insights to realize his great plan. For Christ is the Center of the universe, the one in whom all things in heaven and on earth meet in harmony. The Father has been pleased to bring all things together under the Headship of Christ, by whom the universe came into being and for whose glory it was created. He is the New Adam in whom regenerated mankind finds fulfillment and purpose. To Christ every person, rich or poor, learned or uneducated, can look up to with hope, that this life on earth has a purpose, and all suffering has a deeper meaning, as Jesus so eminently manifested by his patient commitment to his Father's will. In Christ we have all the means necessary to reach that destiny to which we are invited. Again, ought we not break forth in praise of God for his great favor!

3. Once risen from the dead, Christ poured out on all believers the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was promised of old, but only given after Christ had accomplished his Paschal Mystery, and was exalted on high at God's right hand (Acts 2:42). The Spirit is like a

seal which men stamp on documents to denote ownership and possession. So being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit we are God's own possession. It is a bold comparison used by St. Paul, yet it aptly expressed how the Spirit by his presence really transforms us into God's children. Having been "sealed" by the Spirit in our sacramental baptism, we are recognized by the Father as his own, while the Spirit cries within us: "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). He is the guarantee of the full possession of God in heaven (Rom. 8:11). A third time, then we are invited to praise the Lord for his glorious deeds.

Conclusion: All worthy of our love and praise is the Most Blessed Trinity! Each of the three divine persons has been intimately taken up with our well-being here on earth, and our eternal happiness in the world to come. Let words of praise and songs of blessing frequently rise up from our lips and hearts, for the wonderful deeds he has accomplished and continues to accomplish on our behalf. With the Virgin Mother we will sing often her Magnificat, "for he who is mighty has done great things for us".

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 22, 1979)

First Reading: Jeremiah 23: 1-6. For Jeremiah, the Lord himself is the good shepherd who cares for his people, whereas many who have governed them are more hirelings than shepherds (the last kings of Judah, ruling at the time). Severe punishment will be meted out to them. But God will still realize his covenant-love with his people. Their true Shepherd and King comes from David's lineage, (the messianic shoot or bud also mentioned in Is. 11:1). His deeds are all just and holy. The remnants of Judah and Israel will be together under his rule. He will be the true Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last king on the throne of Judah (586), and his name meant: The Lord is justice. But he was anything but that, Christ, the Messiah-King, realizes this name to the full by his genuine righteousness and benevolent rule toward God's People.

Second Reading: Ephesians 2: 13-18. For Paul, so used to stringent laws of separation of Jews from non-Jews, the call of all men to be one in the Body-Person of Christ was most meaningful. That barrier of hostility was symbolized by the partition wall in the Temple, separating Jews from proselytes who could only worship in the "Court of the Gentiles". Any non-Jew passing beyond was guilty

of the death sentence. By his sacrificial death, Christ brought to a close the Old Covenant with its numerous demands and prescriptions, put an end to the laws of separation by inaugurating a new Covenant of love in himself. He thus accomplished the miracle of union of all nations in his Body-Person. He himself is the true Peace of all mankind. In Christ, all are brothers and can come into the presence of the Father through him, united in his Spirit of love.

Gospel Reading: Mark 6: 30-34. After having been sent out on their first mission (6: 7-12), the Twelve on their return gave a detailed account to the Master of their actions and their teaching. But they were so besieged by the throngs that in genuine solicitude Jesus withdrew with them by boat to a less inhabited place, to afford them some respite after the tiresome journeys. The crowd, however, anticipated the move, and when Jesus arrive with the Twelve, the throng awaited them with eager expectation. They were not as yet to have any rest.

Outline for Homily: Hungry for God.

Introduction: Indoctrination and brain-washing are common words today. They refer to methods used by persons who wish to gain their own ends over those they want to control. Knowledge always plays a great part in determining man's actions. He reads the newspapers and periodicals to form his social and political views. He attends college and university to be better equipped for a life career. Man must learn much before he can act properly and to advantage.

1. When Jesus saw the crowds gathered before him, the first thing mentioned of him was that he had compassion on them because they were like scattered sheep with no one to tend to their needs. But the first action he took was not to heal their ailments or still their hunger, but "that he began to teach them many things". He realized that *people were hungry for God*, and what they needed above all was knowledge of God's love, knowledge of his plan of love for them, and the means offered by the Lord to be made use of in order to gain happiness forever. Therefore he unfolded before them the Good News, teaching them many valuable things.

Only by instruction and knowledge of God's ways would they deepen their faith as well as their hope in the good things God had prepared for them. He whetted their appetite for the things of God. Thus they would learn how to respond with love towards their Father in heaven as well as toward their fellowmen as their Father willed it. Love follows on knowledge. If we do not know a person, how can we love that person? If we do not know God,

how can we love God properly? If we are not mindful that our fellowmen are objects of God's love just as we are, how can we love them as Christ bids us to?

2. Knowledge of God and of our holy faith is so necessary today when we are bombarded by all kinds of entertainment in the movies and the TV; as well as all kinds of thrillers in books and magazines. But how much time does God's chosen People give to knowing better God himself, and the beautiful realities of their Catholic religion? How much do our people understand God's plan for them, his ways of treating man in this exile on earth? Yet often when people are given the opportunity to learn more of God and things divine, they respond avidly. Why? Because all along without knowing it, they were hungry for God.

Where can we find clearly the mind of God expressed for his children to learn and to follow? In the word of God. The Sacred Scriptures are written under the impetus of the Holy Spirit "so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). But how many will take time daily to read a few passages of the word of God from the Gospels, which are Christ's words of Spirit and life. Or how many will read for themselves the dynamic words of St. Paul's letters? How many realize that the writings of the prophets speak also to us in our day, and that they give the blue-prints how God treats his People, not only those of the Old Covenant, but also of the New? In these pages we see how God rewards his People for their fidelity to him, but gives them the medicine of chastisement when they failed in their covenant-love by going over to false gods and material prosperity. Once they turned to him in sincere compunction, it is admirable to read how quickly he took them back. Nor ought we neglect the psalms which for centuries was the sole prayer-book of God's People.

3. It is regrettable that many religion class today in our high schools and colleges are mostly or even merely on psychology. Psychology is good in itself, but it only educates the natural man. Religion gives him supernatural insights and the outlook he needs for his life as regenerated in Christ, and a follower of the Crucified. He is destined for something above anything that his nature can by itself attain. He is destined for the vision of the Triune God, to know and to love the infinitely lovable Being for an eternity of complete well-being. Let educators insist that once again our people especially our youth get to know well the fundamentals of our Catholic faith, and that they grow daily by deeper insight into the marvellous dimensions of that faith. God can still the hunger of the heart of man.

Conclusion: In World War II the armed forces in a certain place were shown the movie "The Song of Bernadette", the story of the apparitions of our Lady to the child Bernadette Soubirous. At the end they were given the choice of another movie that same night or a repeat of "The Song of Bernadette". To a man they clamored for a repeat. The men had tasted the goodness of God. They became hungry for more. We too ought to take up good reading material on the things of God, for it is surprising how our thirst for God increases for Him who alone can slake it.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 29, 1979)

First Reading: Second Kings 4: 42-44: The account of Elijah's multiplication of loaves to feed the hungry belongs to a series of narratives, the purpose of which is to demonstrate the power of Yahweh, manifested through the prophet for the good of the People of God. In such narratives, handed down orally for a longer period of time, details were often added as time went on in order to heighten the primary religious message. It is remarkable how many details prefigure the Gospel scene of today.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4: 1-6. After Paul had exposed at great length in the first part of this letter the secret plan of God to bring together all things in heaven and on earth under the one Headship of Christ, thus forming a marvellous and unique unity, he now pleads that those who have received the call to carry out this unity do so by their Christ-like virtues. It is founded on the Spirit of love and the peace of Christ. It is a oneness that is sevenfold in manifestation (Body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father of all), and intimately bound up with the three persons of the Trinity (Spirit, Lord, God and Father). It is penetrated by God's all-pervading presence, who not only is in everyone, but positively works in everyone. Paul spared no effort to bring about the consummation of this mighty plan of God which was also the object of Christ's priestly prayer in John 17: that all may be one as I in you, Father, and you in me.

Gospel Reading: John 6: 1-15. All four Gospels carry the account of the multiplication of the loaves; both Mark and Matthew carry it doubly. The miraculous event had made a deep and lasting impression on all. Here it is linked to the Passover feast, which brings to mind the Eucharist which Jesus celebrated a year from then. It is this special angle of the miraculous event which the

sacred writers are stressing. They even couch the Lord's words and actions in the Eucharistic liturgical words and actions of their community worship at the time of their writing. Both events declare the magnanimity and generosity of the loving Savior. He has a heart of compassion for the multitude, and even chooses the bread of the poor (barley) to work his wonders. He aims to satisfy each individual. Notice his solicitude that nothing go to waste. This also reflects the Christian liturgy in which the same care is given to the Eucharistic particles left over.

Outline for Homily: Big Dividends.

Introduction: People want to get the most out of their money. They invest it where it can bring them the highest interest. They take chances on the lottery or sweep-stakes, hoping for a small amount to win a large sum. They purchase shares that promise the best dividends. Several years ago when xerox duplicating machines came on the market those who bought up shares for a moderate price, soon became the recipients of large returns because of the giant strides that xerox had made in short time. Small amounts produced big dividends.

1. It is worthy of note that in today's gospel-scene, Jesus does not create the food to nourish the immense crowd, but asks first of all for a contribution from his own. A little lad had brought along five barley loaves and two fish. Presumably he had not only intended to nourish himself but also to sell them to others. But when asked to give them to Jesus, he sacrificed both his own nourishment as well as the proceeds he would have obtained by selling the rest. It was a relatively small thing that he gave up, but he made the total sacrifice of it and kept nothing back. What must have been his immense surprise when Jesus fed that great throng of five thousand with five loaves and two fish! How glad he was then to have made the sacrifice. Not only was he himself nourished fully but he was instrumental in feeding that vast crowd. One loaf fed a thousand! What dividends!

2. This is the way the Lord works. He asked us for a small contribution, a small sacrifice of our time or talent or treasure, only to reward it with divine bounty and munificence. He asked the Samaritan women for merely a drink of water (John 4), but imparted knowledge of the Living Water (the Spirit); he brought her step by step to a conversion from her sinful life to acknowledge her need of a Messiah. Then finally he granted to her the supreme revelation that he himself was the Messiah-King of Israel, some-

thing he had shown reluctance to do even to Israel's great ones. What dividends she got from merely sharing a drink of water! Nor was that all. She became the instrument of evangelization for all her townsmen.

When Peter was asked to give up his means of livelihood as a fisherman, what a return he received by becoming the Chief Fisherman for the heavenly waters! He gave up a few fish and received thousands for the messianic banquet. When the Virgin-Mother was asked to give the Savior his body, what an exchange was hers! She became thereby the Mother of God's Son, and Mother of his entire Body-Person, the Church. To all his followers Jesus promises such bountiful returns: "Everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake, will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life" (Mt. 19: 29).

3. When the Lord asks for a contribution of our time, our talent or our treasures, he is never outdone in generosity. He told us in the Gospel: "Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment." (Lk. 6:38). "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for reward" (Mt. 10:42). It is a proven fact that those who sacrifice themselves for others are blessed by God with deep inner happiness. In the words of Dr. Tom Dooley, who worked unremittingly for thousands of unfortunate people in Vietnam, Laos and other places; "The only way man can achieve happiness is to strive for the happiness of others".

Conclusion: In the Early Church, people brought up to the altar at the presentation of the gifts at Mass, the bread they themselves had made and the wine also. That made them set apart for sacred use. Then at communion time, the same gifts which had meantime been transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ at the consecration, were returned to those who gave them. What immense dividends!

BIBLICAL NOTES AND OUTLINES FOR AUGUST

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 5, 1979)

First Reading: Exodus 16; 2-4. 12-15: On their journey to the Promised Land, the People of God for lack of faith break out into numerous complaints against the leaders given them by the Lord, because they are short of the kind of food that had satisfied their palates in Egypt. Despite this show of base ingratitude for their deliverance from bondage, Yahweh hears their complaints and comes to their aid by promptly providing them with the double nourishment of quails and manna. By this twofold manifestation of his glory, they were to recognize that he was truly their God who cared for them (v. 12), and in response they were to conform themselves to his injunctions given through Moses (v. 2b).

"Bread from heaven" poetically describes the manna as the providential gift from the Lord in heaven, and does not mean that it dropped down from the skies. God can make use of natural means to provide food. Quails, in their long journeys of migration, land exhausted in great quantities on the Sinai peninsula and are easily captured. Manna is perhaps a substance made to fall from the tamarisk tree by insect, boring into it; if gathered before the sun is too strong, it hardens and keeps indefinitely. Regardless of what it really consisted in, the manna as well as the quails were recognized as signs of Yahweh's special divine Providence.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4: 17-20-24. Paul contrasts the "old" unregenerated self, its many evil desires and all manner of sinful habits, with the "new" man regenerated in Christ. Such a rebirth implies a deep interior transformation of the whole man. This initially took place in baptism and was aptly symbolized by laying off one's usual garments and donning new white ones. By plunging into the waters of immersion (as baptism was conferred at that time) the baptized signified his entering fully into the mind and heart of Christ. Christ is the image God intended for man at the outset, with all true holiness and genuine perfection. Thus to be a Christian not only makes one enjoy divine sonship but also makes one truly human, as God intended it. However, baptism is only the first step. The Christ-life must be lived daily and deepened. Therefore Paul talks of "learning Christ" (v. 20), listening to what is preached about him, deepening one's knowledge of the Truth, and

one's love for the one great personality that is Christ. Only then can one truly call oneself Christian. Only then is the gradual transformation into Christ perceptible.

Gospel Reading: John 6: 24-35. After having fed the multitude by means of the multiplication of the loaves (v. 11), Jesus endeavors to raise his audience to the higher level of faith. The food they had eaten was perishable. What he really intended to give them was Food that never perished, and conferred unending life on all who partook of it. In order to obtain it they first had to acknowledge him as the "One sent by God" that is, their Messiah-King. That was the "work" God wanted them: the humble acceptance of faith.

Their caustic remark that he had only multiplied ordinary bread while Moses gave their fathers "bread from heaven" led up to a further demand for a greater sign. This prompted Jesus to openly proclaim as his Father the very God who had fed their fathers, and was prepared now to give them the real Heavenly Bread, which was Jesus himself, who alone can still the hunger of every man and quench his thirst. With these last words the Evangelist is already hinting at the Eucharistic banquet Jesus will give in due time.

Outline for Homily: Manna from Heaven.

Introduction: St. Louis of France was kneeling one day in his chapel before the Blessed Sacrament when a man rushed in and urged him to come out quickly, for a miracle had taken place. Most people would have rushed out at once to see the miracle and add to the general commotion. St. Louis remained unperturbed before the Tabernacle. When asked why he had not heeded the report, he said: "I need no greater miracle than my Lord and my God present in the Blessed Sacrament."

1. The marvel of the Eucharist is the product of the infinite inventiveness of the mind of God. To think that the Son of God not only deigned to take on our human nature, a body and a created soul, a human finite mind and human will, but even deigned to hide both humanity and divinity under the appearance of a small wafer of bread, is something so overwhelming that the mind of man is unable to express its admiration adequately. Had the Lord chosen some exotic or rare food, people would travel for days to obtain it, once they believed it was the Body and Blood of the Savior. But because he chose such ordinary food and drink (wine is the common drink in Palestine), it is hardly appreciated as it ought

to be. That is why faith is so necessary to grasp both the fact and the depth of this most Blessed Sacrament. It is truly a heavenly Manna.

2. Faith it was that Jesus demanded from his contemporaries and it is faith that he demands of us. He tried to make them understand that the manna of old was merely a passing figure of the reality. The reality was he himself, the true Manna which the Father had sent from heaven. He was the Bread of Life. No one needs to buy this Bread with money or earthly exchange of goods. They need only come in sincere faith to still their hunger and quench their thirst, and it would be given to them freely. But the Jews were unwilling to accept this, because they saw in Jesus a mere man from Nazareth, and would not believe he was God's Son, sent to be their Bread of Life.

There are millions of pagans and Moslems today who do not have this faith either. Not only that. Even among those who call themselves Catholics, how many have the proper faith and appreciation for the Blessed Sacrament? Perhaps they have received the Eucharist from childhood on, but how many receive out of habit rather than any deep conviction? Do they really believe in the meaning of the Eucharist? Again it is their faith that needs to be revitalized, if the Eucharist is to have its full effect in the heart of man. Just as the manna kept God's People alive in the desert-sojourn, so it is this heavenly Manna that keeps man spiritually alive in this earthly sojourn, and enables him to reach that life that never ends.

3. To come in and reverently genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle manifests our Catholic faith. Jesus our Lord is truly present there. To remain quietly with him for a while in the spirit of prayer and sacrifice takes a greater faith, and many are not able to stand the test. They have to get going. To remain longer is too demanding. Yet how long would they wait in the ante-chamber or vestibule of the president or a high dignitary even to enjoy a brief visit with that person! What a contrast! Our Lord and Savior, our divine Brother is here day and night in the Tabernacle, only for our sakes, and we find it difficult to exercise true faith and love toward him there? Who else can nourish us with the Bread that strengthens us to walk the journey even to the heights of the mountain as Elijah did?

Blessed are those who find their peace and their joy, remaining in the Presence of the Lord in the Tabernacle, when they have the opportunity! They have tasted the true Manna from heaven and

know its sweetness. They do not tire of this heavenly Manna as the Israelites did. For them this is the Manna which has in itself all delights.

Conclusion: If it is the express will of our Divine Kuya that we come to him to be nourished by him, is it not the height of indifference and ingratitude not to accede to his wishes. In the long run it is we who are the beneficiaries. The Manna is there to sustain us who are God's children.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 12, 1979)

First Reading: First Kings 19:4-8. Elijah had striven might and main to bring back Israel (the Northern Kingdom) to Yahweh, for it had sunk deeply into paganism under the wicked queen Jezebel. He had every reason to hope for success in face of the awakening of the people after heaven had proven that Yahweh was God, in the miraculous consumption of the holocaust (ch. 18). But Jezebel, furious over the death of her "prophets", turned his triumph into dismay by banishing him forthwith from her realm. Discouraged, he fled for his life to the southern limits of Judah. Despite his mighty deeds, he acknowledged that he was no more successful than anyone else before him and he begged the Lord to let him die. But divine Providence furnished him food and drink in a wonderful manner. Strengthened by the repast, he undertook a pilgrimage to the very mountain (Sinai-Horeb) where Yahweh first established the covenant with Israel through his servant Moses, for he was determined to re-vitalize the covenant in its pristine purity. Though the distance was some 500 kms., the food sustained him.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:30 to 5:2. Paul uses the bold metaphor (as in 1:13) of the seal for the Holy Spirit. A seal was either a wax imprint on a document or a brand on the flesh. In either case it denoted ownership and belonging. The Christian by his possession of the Indwelling Holy Spirit is marked as Christ's own possession. Accordingly his actions must be Christ-like. The manifestations of sinful man are to give way to a deeply lived Christ-life, with special emphasis on generous forgiveness of one another, the very action of God toward them in Christ. As children of their heavenly Father, they are to be like him. Their perfect model is the Son of God who became their brother. They must imitate

his way of love, which went all out in total self-oblation to the Father for their sakes. No longer must the Christian abandon himself to pagan vices, but surrender himself to God in an oblation of sacrificial love for the sake of his fellowmen. Christ is pictured as priest and victim (v. 5) and his sacrifice (in the image of the Old Testament liturgy) is likened to a fragrant odor ascending to God (Lev. 3:5).

Gospel Reading: John 6:41-51. A hostile audience saw in Jesus only a man like themselves. For them the stumbling block was the Incarnation. They mention Joseph as his father, but Jesus counters at once by referring to God as his Father. Reason alone cannot convince them of this. Faith is needed, and faith is a gift of the Father through the manipulations of his love (grace). Its mysterious workings in the heart of every man is described in the graphic manner of *the Father attracting him* to come to his Son. Only the Son sees the Father, but since the Father has revealed himself fully in his Son, seeing Christ is seeing the Father in faith. Those who respond to this mysterious attraction of the Father will experience the divine power of the Son in the resurrection, so as to enjoy life unending.

Several points are then re-stated which Jesus already mentioned, which is the author's way of developing his theme in waves of thought. They climax in the final statement that the Bread of Life is the Eucharistic Meal. No matter how the contemporaries of Jesus understood his word concerning the Bread of Life, St. John from the very beginning (v. 27) is gradually developing for his Christian readers the theme of the Eucharistic Food, the Bread which *Jesus will give* (v. 51). For all who receive the Eucharist in sincere faith, Jesus himself is the source of life unending.

Outline for Homily: Drawn by a Magnet.

Introduction: A magnet has the peculiar characteristics to draw definite particles to itself by an inner magnetic power. It is used on a smaller scale and also in larger factories. We likewise speak of magnetic personalities, whereby persons draw others to themselves by the dynamism of their character, or their beauty or some other quality, which greatly appeals to others. Then too there are some who possess special magnetic powers which endow them with exceptional abilities.

1. Jesus compares the work of the Father in the heart of man to a magnet, when he speaks of the Father drawing someone. It is an apt comparison, for it describes well the divine action on a

man attracting him to Christ. This is God's grace. It is needed if anyone is to accept Christ for what he really is, and above all to accept his teaching on his mysterious Presence in the Eucharistic Bread of Life. No mind, no reasoning powers, no deduction could ever arrive at the reality of these mysteries. Revelation is necessary first. One can only believe it because Jesus has declared it.

Even then the grace of faith is needed to accept the word of Jesus. The Father must "draw" him to Jesus. This is why the Jews grumbled and complained. They could not see how this man in front of them whom they knew merely as a man, could claim to be from heaven, and above all to be the Bread of Life for their eternal salvation. So Jesus made it clear that the Father had a say in it too. He had to draw men to Jesus and only then will they accept the profound mystery of the Incarnation and the Eucharist. It is the Father who first attracts by his mysterious action we call grace. It works on man's mind and heart like a magnet, yet there is a difference. A magnet is irresistible when it draws iron particles, but man is free to resist the loving attraction of God. We are free to accept or reject the grace of God. Little man has a free will and he can refuse to believe!

2. Once, anyone moved by God's grace commits himself to Christ, the work of Christ can go on apace. He nourishes the child of God. He continues to give growth to the Christ-life within a man. Even if death overtakes him, this life is to be everlasting. Jesus solves the apparent contradiction by solemnly promising in today's gospel that he would raise up on the last day all those whom the Father had drawn to him and given over to him. The Lord wants to emphasize this property of the Bread of Life, so as to make us appreciate it fully. The goal is life forever with God in love.

That is why it is very desirable to receive the Lord in Holy Viaticum when death approaches. The word "viaticum" comes from two Latin words which give it the meaning "on the way with you". Jesus wants to accompany all those who are his own to the Father's House. He will go on the way home with them. With the Lord near, fear of death is overcome and the dying man is well protected against the final onslaughts of the Evil One. Thus Jesus is not only the Bread that gives Life forever, but he is also the Way to the eternal home (John 14:6). Death is only a temporary state, for the Lord is risen from the dead and will raise up someday all who have received him with faith and have partaken during this life of the Tree of Life.

Conclusion: Love of the Eucharist is a special grace. But it can be obtained by prayer. If we meditate on the great gift that the Father has given us in his Son's special Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, we would be drawn inevitably toward a more frequent reception of that Sacrament. With a little encouragement children will gladly receive the Lord frequently although there ought not be any moral force used to induce them. The best inducement is the good example of their elders. If all would realize what this Sacrament means for us in this life and in the afterlife, we would spare no effort to receive it often and worthily. Jesus asks no admission price. He only wishes our love and acceptance.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 19, 1979)

First Reading: Proverbs 9:1-6. The first nine chapters of Proverbs are inspired strophes (of later origin) on God's Wisdom. Personified as a housemother in this passage, divine Wisdom invites the simple of heart to her banquet of heavenly doctrine and virtuous conduct in order to possess life in its fullest meaning; in 4:13 life means possessing Wisdom herself.

Liturgically, the passage seems to have been selected in view of the Eucharistic Banquet of the Gospel-reading. Seven pillars would then conger up the thought of the sacraments, (though in itself seven merely suggest a full number), and the table spread with meat (food) and wine that of the Eucharistic meal. Even the least of mankind are invited to taste the banquet, provided they reliquish the ways of folly. And the goal is Life itself!

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20. Paul offers his Christians a series of wise counsels as to what the Christian commitment demands of them. Again there is the contrast between acting wisely and foolishly (as in the first reading). Prudence and forethought ought to be their guides. Above all to seek to discern what is God's will for them. Too much wine leads to sins of the flesh; let them rather enjoy the wine of the Spirit, and sing gratefully the praises of God one with Christ the Lord. This latter point would seem to refer to the eucharistic gatherings.

Gospel Reading: John 6:51-58. First of all, Jesus recapitulated what he had said previously, declaring clearly that he himself was the Living Manna, come down from heaven, to give life eternal, but

he climaxed his statement with the stupendous mystery of the Eucharist. So clearly did he mean that his real Body and Blood were to be partaken, that the Jews misunderstood him to mean cannibalism! Jesus neither retracted nor explained what he meant, because he had to be taken on his word (this is faith). On the contrary he states all the more forcefully the necessity of partaking of his Flesh and Blood, for that meal affords true life, life that never ends, to be obtained in the resurrection.

Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Jesus (which at the last supper would be shown to be a sacramental partaking in the Eucharist) brings about a most intimate intercommunion with Christ, as well as a sharing of the life of Christ in full, just as he shares that of the Father. A final repetition stresses the importance of the matter.

Outline for Homily: The Meal that Makes Community.

Introduction: You are invited to a banquet on a special occasion. There are many well known guests. There is a large amount of food on the table and a variety of drinks. You eat well and thoroughly enjoy the company of others with whom you are soon bound in jovial friendship. Yet, after some time the banquet is over. You return home, separated from the other guests. Next day you are hungry and thirsty again. But the banquet of the Lord joins in everlasting friendship both with God and with man. And Jesus says explicitly: The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. And: No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall ever thirst.

1. Who would ever have thought that Christ would devise such a wonderful meal as the Eucharist? It is a banquet that is a bond of union between God and his People and between each member of Christ. It is truly the Eucharist that makes community. Jesus wanted to be so closely united with each of us that he himself became our sacred Banquet. On special occasions a host might deign to cook the meal himself if he is an expert and even serve the guests if he so desires. But Jesus goes much further. He himself is the Food offered to the guests! If the Jews were angry at his words, it is only because they understood him in a materialistic way, after the manner of cannibals. But Jesus had in mind the mystery of the Eucharist. Man would eat his Flesh and drink his Blood but it would be in a sacramental manner, under the appearance of bread and wine.

2. When we partake of food and drink, they are transformed into our blood-cells and become part of us, so that we continue to live and be healthy and strong, warding off all poisonous germs. But when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ it works in reverse. *Christ transforms us more and more into himself.* We become more like unto him each time we receive him in communion, and more united with the great community of Christ's members, the family of God. That is why he states so emphatically that unless we eat his Flesh and drink his Blood, we will not have life in us at all, much less continue to live of his life. Every human heart longs to live fully, and that is exactly what he offers us. The more we partake of him in the Eucharist, the stronger becomes our Christian life, the easier we find it to ward off temptations and sin, for these are the germs that bring on death. With St. Paul we can say: I live, not I, but Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20). Again he tells the Corinthians: "The loaf of bread is one, so we many as we are, are one Body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17)

3. Jesus also points out in today's gospel that the chief effect of this Eucharistic meal is interpersonal relations between the Lord and ourselves. It is intercommunion in its highest form: Christ in us and we in Christ. What closer union is thinkable? So great is this mutual union, that it faithfully reflects the very union of the divine Son with his Father. That union is perfect in the Love of the Spirit. So Holy Communion brings about our union with God in the oneness of Spirit. That is community at its best. As the Blessed Trinity is the source and model of all community life, so the Eucharist brings about the actual community-life of all in God. Can man desire anything more than to live the very life of God in community?

Conclusion: Today, the Mass is again taking the first place in all manifestations of our Catholic religion. It always held that place but at times private devotions tended to eclipse it. It must hold the first place in the heart of every sincere Catholic. It is the Body and Blood of the Lord offered in sacrifice, and given to God's People as their sacrificial meal. Once this is realized, people will again walk long distances to be present at the eucharistic celebration, youth will not be bored by attending it, men will take the lead in bearing witness to their staunch faith in the Eucharistic Lord, present in sacrifice for those he loves.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**(August 26, 1979)**

First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a. 15-17. 18b. After having conquered the land of Canaan for God's people and apportioned the tribes their definite territory, Joshua held a final gathering at Shechem, at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, and put before them this challenge: Would they serve false gods like their ancestors did, or would they follow him, Joshua, and his family, and serve Yahweh, the one true God? With one voice the people proclaim their covenant-allegiance to Yahweh as their God who as Savior-Deliverer led them out of Egypt, and who cared for them so providentially all along the way.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32. Here Paul gives deeply theological insights concerning the married. He sees Christ's love for the Church as the model and ideal for married love. Christ's love was sacrificial love, for he gave himself up to death to make the Church his holy and spotless bride, completely regenerating her by the waters of Baptism and the word (of the gospel or of the baptismal formula), so that she is a beautiful bride in every respect. The implication is that husbands should also labor tirelessly with sacrificial love to make their wives attain the perfection that becomes them. Since in v. 26 Paul had called the husband the head of the wife as Christ is head of his Body, the Church, he now can state that husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. As Christ loved his Body, the Church, so the husband should care for his wife as his own self.

Quoting Gen. 2:24 Paul's inspired insight sees the deeper meaning of the verse, namely, the married are a reflection of the ideal union between Christ and the Church. But the ideal always surpasses the reflection. Thus the married do not become literally one body, but that is just the wonderful mystery in Christ, that he and the Church are one Body-Person. From this intimate union of Christ and the Church, Christian marriage derives its sanctifying power. (The Vulgate translated the Greek word "mysterion" as "sacramentum", but Paul is not referring directly to the sacrament in its later usage of the word. Marriage is a great mystery or foreshadowing of Christ's union with the Church).

Gospel Reading: John 6:60-69. On the insistence of Jesus that his flesh is to be partaken as food, the disciples now in their turn show great repugnance. They are thinking of crass cannibalism. Jesus neither retracts nor explains the meaning of his word, but

insists that they take his word on faith. He refers to his return to the Father in proof of his claims. In v. 63, "flesh" stands for man of himself without the enlightenment of the Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:6). The Spirit alone can reveal to man the spiritual and life-giving content of Jesus' words.

Again Jesus insists on the role of faith for which the Father's attraction (grace) is needed. But the result of the confrontation is dismaying. The greater number of disciples defect. They want to understand before accepting his word. Jesus is ready even to part with the Twelve if they do not believe. Peter steps to the rescue and as spokesman states their loyal adherence. They do firmly believe that Jesus is God's envoy sent from above; unreservedly they accept his words engendering life eternal.

Outline for Homily: It is the Spirit that gives life.

Introduction: What a masterpiece is the human body! All the members are coordinated so that the best effect is obtained. Continually the heart sends the blood pulsing through the arteries. How faithfully the brain reacts to the least impulse! Without let-up the lungs breathe in oxygen and give out waste matter. Each organ has its own task to perform without encroaching on any of the others. The more one studies the human body, the more one marvels at it. Yet what gives it life energy, movement, purpose? The spirit in man, that life-giving principle the soul. Without the inner spirit, the body lies lifeless. It cannot move, it cannot act. And soon it decays and turns to dust. The same holds good in the supernatural realm. It is the Spirit that gives life.

1. As long as Jesus fed the crowds, healed their ailments and showed himself interested in their well-being, they flocked to him, held him in greatest esteem followed him wherever he went and wanted to proclaim him as king. But when he continued to reveal to them the deep mysteries of his divine message, the realities of the supernatural world and of his kingdom, realities which men's minds would not be able to grasp by mere human reasoning, without the help of the Spirit of God, many backed down. They lacked the gift of faith. Thus when he revealed to them the mystery of the Eucharist, that he would give them his Body and Blood for their nourishment, they became angry and departed from him. They walked no more with him. Jesus was deserted by the large number of his one-time followers.

Turning to the twelve he asked them if they too wanted to leave. He was willing to give them up also, and begin all over

again, but he would not back down from his statements which he demanded to be taken on his word, that is, on faith. A year later at the last supper he would make it clear that they would eat his Flesh and drink his Blood in a sacrament, under the appearance of bread and wine, but now he did not explain. They had to take him on faith: "I solemnly assure you: If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you have no life in you".

2. It must have been a keen disappointment for the Heart of Christ to see the crowds dwindle away, whom he had taught so often, healed their ailments, and fed in the wilderness. Instead of gratefully accepting his offer, and trusting that he knew what he was about, they broke out in angry complaints. Then he told them frankly: What you need is the Spirit. "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless." Why did they not ask him for the Spirit to help them accept his words on faith? Why did they not say with the Samaritan woman: "Give me of this water so that I do not again grow thirsty" (Jn. 4:15). Why did they not cry out with the father of the boy who was possessed: "I do believe. Help me to believe still more" (Mk. 9:24)?

This is what is needed today: renewal in the Spirit of Christ so as to revitalize our faith in the Eucharist. Only the Spirit can make us penetrate more deeply into this mystery of God's love. Day and night our Eucharistic Lord remains with us in thousands of churches and chapels all over the world, especially in this Catholic land of ours. Every night the theaters in the cities are crowded, and so are the other places of amusement. How many faithful adorers will come to spend some time and manifest their staunch faith in their Eucharistic Lord? These are the saviors of mankind together with the Savior himself, praying for their fellowmen. On them the Spirit rests.

3. How well did Simon Peter respond in the name of all in today's gospel: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". The heart of man will not find rest and fulfillment in anyone else than in Christ his Lord and Savior. He deserves our loyal allegiance. He appreciates our coming to him, and remaining with him a while, or if this is not possible because of our duties, then at least that we unite with him spiritually and think of him there in the Tabernacle, praying for us and offering himself continually to the Father for us. He alone can solve all our

problems or at least give us the strength to carry our cross in this life. He alone can heal our wounds. Not only does the Eucharist refresh and strengthen us for the daily battle, but gives us the guarantee for a life that never ends. That life is worth striving for.

Conclusion: Love of the word of God and love of the Eucharist go hand in hand, because they constitute the two fold table by which God refreshes and nourishes his children. We ought to be aware that since Vatican II, the Mass is presented as having two parts only: the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Both are important. The first part is intended to prepare our minds and hearts by the readings and explanation of the written word of God, so that the People of God could be further be nourished with the Incarnate Son of God personally in the Eucharist. But if many of the faithful come late for Mass on Sundays, they miss so much of the part which is intended to prepare their minds and hearts. Only when they regain a love for hearing the word of God will they better appreciate receiving the personal Word of God in the Eucharist.

Department of Public Works and Communications
Republic of the Philippines
BUREAU OF POST
Manila

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(Required by Act 2580)

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N A M E	A D D R E S S
Editor: Fr. Efren Rivera, O.P.	U.S.T., España, Manila
Managing Editor: Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P. . .	U.S.T., España, Manila
Business Manager: Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P. . .	U.S.T., España, Manila
Owner: University of Santo Tomas	U.S.T., España, Manila
Publisher: University of Santo Tomas	U.S.T., España, Manila
Printer: Novel Publishing Co., Inc.	U.S.T., España, Manila
Office of Publication: Univ. of Santo Tomas	U.S.T., España, Manila

In case of publication other than daily, total number of copies printed and circulated of the last issue dated May-June.

1. Sent to paid subscribers	1,495
2. Sent to others than paid subscribers	90
T O T A L	1,585

(Sgd.) FR. EFREN RIVERA, O.P.
Editor

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 23 of April, 1979 at Manila, the affiant exhibiting his Residence Certificate No. 159589 issued at Manila on January 26, 1979.

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Until December 31, 1980
PTR No. CTO-82106-MLA. 1-16-79